

***DIGU PŪJĀ* : LINEAGE GOD WORSHIP**
A CULTURAL STUDY OF THE KATHMANDU CITY

A Dissertation

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NEPALESE HISTORY, CULTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

By

TINA MANANDHAR

Ph.D. Regd. No.: 064/14

T.U. Regd. No.: 14530-95

Tribhuvan University

Kathmandu, Nepal

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled “***Digu Pūjā : Lineage God Worship A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu City***” was prepared by Tina Manandhar under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology.

Prof. Dr. Ranjana Bajracharya

Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Jagadish Chandra Regmi

Expert

Date:

APPROVAL LETTER

This dissertation entitled “*Digu Pūjā : Lineage God Worship A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu City*” was submitted by **Tina Manandhar** for final examination by the research committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in *Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology*. I hereby certify that the research committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has therefore accepted it for the degree.

Date:

Prof. Chintamani Pokharel, Ph.D.
Chairman and Dean
Research Committee

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Ph.D. dissertation entitled “*Digu Pūjā : Lineage God Worship A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu City*” is submitted by me to the office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Nepal is an entirely original work prepared under the supervision and guidance of supervisor Prof. Dr. Ranjana Bajracharya and co-supervisor Prof. Dr. Jagadish Chandra Regmi. I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The result presented in this dissertation has not ever presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other purposes. No part of the contents of this dissertation has ever been published in the form or a part of any book. I am solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Tina Manandhar

Date:

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I, however, bear all the responsibilities for the dissertation report.

ABSTRACT

Nepal is rich in cultural diversity. Many different ethnicities add wealth to the varied customs here. However, when we talk about Kathmandu, it is mainly the Newari culture that is being referred to. Apart from the festivals that are observed within the small limit of a single family, people also observe festivals requiring participation of families of different generations from a single lineage. These festivals help them to create unity amongst the family members who by some reason are not staying together in a large joint family. ‘*Digu Pūjā*’ is one such occasion which is celebrated in a joint manner by all the family members of different generations of the same lineage. The concept to worship the lineage god is also found among the Non-Newars, and they call it ‘*Dewāli Pūjā*’. Ways of celebration may be different but the concept is similar, and that is - to bring all the family members in one place and create the feeling of oneness.

Digu pūjā was/is a most significant religious/cultural celebration of the Newars through which they exhibit their rich cultural potentialities. But this aspect of the Newari culture, (i.e. the celebration of *Digu pūjā* in varied ways), has been considerably overlooked by cultural historians and anthropologists. Through this research, the researcher wants to throw some light on this highly cultured tradition of Newars. It focuses on the deviations that have occurred in the rituals, and under the changed situation and circumstances, and also identifies some basic differences in *pūjā* rituals among the Newars themselves, while keeping the main concept intact. Through this research, the researcher has analysed the impact of the *pūjā* among the younger generation who show little interest on it because of its lengthy period and strict rules and regulations.

The general objective of this study is focused on the cultural, historical and social aspects of the *pūjā* ceremony among the Newars, while this study specifically tries to analyse the changes that occurred in the recent past and the people’s reactions to these changes along with some considerable departure from the past during the recent years. Rituals followed/observed by the different caste groups of the Newars have been described in detail as well as it explain the concept of *Kula Devatā* among the Non Newars.

This study is limited to the rituals and procedures which the Newars of Kathmandu observe. However, an attempt has been made to make a comparative study of *Dewāli Pūjā* with other communities. Though this research is based on both primary as well as secondary sources, it is highly dependent upon the primary sources such as observation, interview, personal participation etc. as there are very little written resources about the *Digu pūjā* of Newars.

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters. The first one is the introductory chapter in which the objective of the study along with scope and limitation, study area and research methodology of the study is described. Second chapter is Literature Review in which all the previous works done in the same topic or topics related with this are evaluated in detail. Third chapter deals with the theoretical approach to the lineage god (*digu dyo*), next chapter is related to Lineage God and the Newars, dealing with the anthropological study of the Newars with reference to their religion, caste hierarchy, *guthi* system etc. The fifth chapter is the main part of the dissertation. It discusses in detail the rituals performed during the lineage god worship by the Newars of Kathmandu. In the sixth chapter under the heading of Changing Patterns in Rituals, the changing styles in the rituals is discussed with possible reasons while in the next chapter a comparative study of the rituals performed by the Non newars during their lineage god worship is discussed. The final or eighth chapter discusses the future prospects of this highly cultured ritual of the Newars along with some suggestions for the preservation and continuation of this ritual so that our future generation could also learn about their culture by participating in it and not merely by reading the rituals in books.

On one hand, it has become the duty of the younger generation to preserve this ancient tradition, whereas on the other hand, it is also necessary to simplify the *pūjā* process or ritual to make room for wider participation.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Nepali society is diverse as it is multi ethnic, multi lingual, multi religious and multi cultural. Nepal, now a secular state, used to be the only Hindu Kingdom in the world. The country was customary for the religious harmony among its people as Buddhist communities coexisted with their Hindu neighbours. There is also a similarity between the two legends: one Hindu and another Buddhist version which explains the origin of the Kathmandu Valley, the only difference being the main character where Manjushri from Mahachin in the Buddhist version is replaced by Lord Krishna, the eightth incarnation of Lord Vishnu of Dwaparyuga in the Hindu legend. Not only in legends but even today, this religious harmony is found among both the communities. In the past, the king of Nepal who is a Hindu and regarded as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu used to preside over the big Buddhist festival of Samyak puja. He would also preside as the chief guest during Indrajatra, the chariot festival of Kumari, the living goddess chosen from Buddhist family of Sakya caste and also during the festival of Bhotojatra, a festival related with Karunamaya, a Buddhist deity of rain and prosperity. "Unity in Diversity" is the popular slogan here, which ascertains the rich cultural heritage it boasts.

The culture of Nepal, which still is the identity of this country in the world in real sense, is the culture of the people who lived in the three main cities (Kantipur, Bhadgaon and Patan) i.e, Newars. Newars, the dominant ethnic community of the Kathmandu Valley are also famous for their achievements in sculpture, painting, architecture etc. Newar is not a caste but is a group of castes who has similar language and culture. More interestingly, internally, these people are composed of Hindu and Buddhist sections. Rajopadhaya, Shrestha etc are Hindu Newars whereas Bajracharya, Shakya, Tuladhar, Manandhar, Maharjan, etc. are Buddhist Newars.

Religion is highly significant in Newar society. People perform ritual act everyday and celebrate their festivals with much enthusiasm. *Guthi* system of Newars is an important feature of this society. Although *Guthi* systems were prevalent in both Newar and Non-Newar caste in ancient time, it is only Newars who have continued this culture to the present time irrespective to other caste groups. Since the land of the Kathmandu Valley was fertile, people would earn enough for a year by working hard for just three months. The rest of the time they spent in religious activities and developed a culture of their own. *Guthi* is a system which is established for a certain task which might be either social work or related to culture as to celebrate any festival or ritual work or to accomplish rituals related to a man especially at the time of death. When such *guthis* are established, a source of income for its smooth run is also selected. For this purpose, some land, building, property, etc are established in the name of the *Guthi*. The responsibility to run this *Guthi* and to use its property properly is upon its members. Lineage god *guthi* or *digu dyo guthi* is one of them.

Nepali society has a tradition of structured living in a joint family. People used to live in a joint family and there was no concept of a single family. As time passed on, it became difficult to normalize and adjust within a large family. Although people started living in separate single families, they had a lineage god and once or twice in a year, they would all assemble for the '*pūjā*' (ceremony or a religious festival) of their lineage god, which they, in their own language, call as '*Digu Pūjā*'. This *pūjā* is symbolic as the union of the family members, for it brings all the family members together. Both the Hindu and Buddhist Newars of the capital perform *Digu pūjā* but in varied customs.

Another reason for this celebration is the belief in god. The reverence of lineage god ('*Kula Devatā*') is above all other gods. People believe that every success of theirs is because of the blessings of their lineage god, who helps them at difficult times. Therefore, they celebrate the *pūjā* in a grand way. During the entire *pūjā*, every family member must follow the strict rules and regulations established by the senior

family members, and it is believed that an ill luck will follow if they do not follow it accordingly.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Digu pūjā was/is a most significant religious/cultural celebration of the Newars through which they exhibit their rich cultural potentialities. But this aspect of the Newari culture, (i.e. the celebration of *Digu pūjā* in varied ways), has been considerably overlooked by cultural historians and anthropologists. Through this research, the researcher wants to throw some light on this highly cultured tradition of Newars. It will also focus on the deviations that have occurred in the rituals, and in the difference between the *pūjā* rituals amongst the Newars. Through this research, the researcher will also focus on the impact of the *pūjā* among the younger generation who show little interest on it because of the lengthy period and strict rules and regulations.

On one hand, it has become the duty of the younger generation to conserve this ancient tradition, whereas on the other hand, it is also necessary to simplify the *pūjā* process or ritual to make it more convenient. Through this research, some suggestions have been presented for continuity of the culture by the younger generation with their whole hearted interest and active participation, not taking this as the burden laid down by their forefathers. This study focuses to answer some research questions such as:

1. Why did the young generation take less interest in observing *Digu pūjā* ?
2. What suitable changes should be made to preserve this significant cultural ritual?
3. What should be the role of the government to facilitate the promotion of *Digu pūjā* ?

1.2 Objectives

The general objective of this study was focused on the cultural, historical and social aspects of the *pūjā* ceremony among the Newars. Its origin was traced and the changes that have occurred in the *pūjā* rituals and the present situation was analysed. The specific objectives are as follow:

- To explain the historical evidences on the origin of *Digu Pūjā* ceremony.
- To make a comparative study of *Digu pūjā* practices among the different castes of the Newars.
- To observe and analyse the gender inequality issue that is demonstrated in the *pūjā* ceremony.
- To find out social implications of *Digu pūjā* in Newar society.
- To analyze the changes that occurred in the recent past and the people's reactions to these changes.
- To explain the concept of *Kula Devatā* among the Non Newars.

1.3 Justification

Although there are a number of books about the rituals of the Newars (Hindus or Buddhists), there has not been any serious work done especially on the *Dewāli Pūjā*. All these books can be taken only as reference work to obtain a brief knowledge about the worshipping of lineage deities in Kathmandu Valley. This research; however, is completely different as the focus is on the detailed study about the Lineage Deity worship among the Newars of Kathmandu. Although it is specific to Kathmandu, It is assumed that, this dissertation would be a significant work to provide a baseline for further works on *Digu pūjā*.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

Not only among the Newars, there are evidences of *Kula Devatā Pūjā* in most of the other ethnic and caste groups of Nepal as well. But as it is the case study of Newars of Kathmandu, it is limited to the rituals and procedures which the Newars of Kathmandu observe. However, an attempt has been made to make a comparative study of *Dewāli Pūjā* with other communities.

While choosing other caste preference has been given to those who have settled in Kathmandu or perform their *Kul Devatā Pūjā* here as the study area of this research is Kathmandu. As such Lohani from Brahmin, Pant, Rana and Shah from Chhetri, Gurung as ethnic community and Yadav from the Terai region have been selected.

1.5 Research Methodology

Though this research is based on both primary as well as secondary sources it is highly dependent upon the primary sources such as observation, interview, personal participation etc. as there are very little written resources about the *Digu pūjā* of Newars.

Three sets of questions were prepared for the interview schedule. It was structured interview as the questions asked were with same wording and order. All the questions included were open ended. However as the researcher herself took the interview and recording there were instances where the interview schedule took unstructured format also as it was necessary to explain the questions. While taking the sample set, special focus was given in choosing the age group so as to ensure participation and viewpoints of different age groups specially views of younger generation were sought regarding future prospects and perspectives.

Along with that people who have been involved in this *pūjā* for a long time were interviewed. In addition to that, cultural historians who have knowledge in the field of Newari culture, old aged people having a long experience of rituals, priest of different

castes specially including priests from both Buddha-Margi and Shiva-Margi Newars were chosen for the interview. Respondents from each caste were chosen after consulting the persons from their central association.

Personal observation was also made in times of the *pūjā* ceremonies of other caste in which non participant observation method was followed.

As for secondary sources books, articles related to Newari culture have been consulted. Unpublished M.A. and Ph.D theses were also studied in due course at Central Department Library, NeHCA, and T.U. Central Library, Kirtipur. Original documents on the Newari culture have been studied at Āsā Safu Kuthi and National Archives.

Study Area

Kathmandu city is located in the northwestern part of Kathmandu Valley with an area of 50.67 square kilometers and is 1350 meters above sea level. The city is bounded by the Lalitpur to the south and Bhaktapur to the east.

During the medieval period the entire population of Kathmandu was the Newars and their city area was extended to Bhotahity in the east, Raktakali in the west, Thahity in the north and Teku in the south. But after the unification because of migration to and from this historical city the Newar population decreased to a maximum extent. The National census of Nepal 2011 gives the population of Newars in Kathmandu as 5,16,295 which is 29.6% of the total population. Even then the Newars are very rich in their Cultural traditions and every cultural ritual of the city is directly or indirectly related to them.

1.6 Chapter Scheme

This dissertation is divided into following chapters. The first one is the introductory chapter in which the objective of the study along with scope and limitation, study area

and research methodology of the study is described in accordance with the format of the Dean's office. Second chapter is Literature Review in which all the previous work done in the same topic or topics related with this are discussed in detail. Third chapter is under the heading of *Digu Dyo*:Lineage God. This one is the background chapter dealing with the theoretical approach to the lineage god. The difference between lineage god (*Kula devatā*) and *iṣṭa devatā* along with the evolution of concept of lineage god is mentioned. The importance of lineage god and its social implication along with the changing patterns in its importance is briefly mentioned.

Fourth chapter is Lineage God and the Newars, this chapter deals with the anthropological study of the Newars with reference to their religion, caste hierarchy, *guthi* system etc. The fifth chapter *Digu Pūjā* discusses in detail the rituals performed during the lineage god worship by the Newars of Kathmandu. This chapter is primarily based on personal observation and interviews of concerned priests and participants.

In the sixth chapter under the heading of Changing Patterns in Rituals, changing styles in the rituals is discussed with few possible reasons like economic, change of perception of such rituals specially among younger generation, scarcity of necessary materials for the rituals, busy life etc.

Seventh chapter *Kula Pūjā*: The Lineage God worship among Non Newars is a comparative study of the rituals performed by the Non newars during their lineage god worship. Ritual details of some Non newar caste are mentioned along with comparative study. Eighth chapter is the final one which discusses the future prospects of this highly cultured ritual of the Newars along with some suggestion for the continuation of this ritual so that our future generation could also learn about their culture by participating and not merely by reading the rituals in books.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Literature review of relevant work is a very essential step to develop ideas for the study. This chapter reviews previous works that are relevant to this study. Prior to the collection of information through field study, a thorough study of the documents related to the topic was made. Particularly books and articles that dealt with Newari culture were studied.

Religion of Newars

During the medieval period, the three cities in the center namely Kantipur, Bhadgaon and Patan were collectively called as Nepal and the principle inhabitants of these places were Newars. Some writer opine that the word Newar itself is derived from the word Nepal which referred to the people living in Nepal.¹ Though they have similar language and culture, with reference to the religion they follow Newars can be grouped under two sub divisions- Buddha-margi Newars and Shiva-margi Newars. Main basis for distinguishing between a Buddhist and Saiva Newar is the employment of the Priest. Bajracharya is the priest for Buddhist followers and Deo Brahmin for Shiva-margi Newars. However there are some exceptions, as some castes have both Bajracharya and Deo Brahmin as their priest. The Hindu-Buddhist religious harmony that is found among the people of Nepal is maintained with Buddhist playing major role as Anne Vergati explains it as

What is noteworthy in the case of the Buddhism of the Valley of Kathmandu is its great capacity for adopting itself to Hindu ideology and practice. Buddhists without losing their identity and abandoning their ideology have accepted the Hindu caste system and the rules of ritual purity.²

¹ Thakur lal Manandhar, *Bhaju Nibanda*, (Collection of Essays on the Newars), Kantipur: Nepal Bhasa Patrika, 1111N.S., p. 57

² Anne Vergati, *Gods, Men and Territory: Society and Culture in Kathmandu Valley*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributers, 1995, p. 24

In this connection writer also correctly points out the main reason for the survival of Buddhism in the country is because of the transformation of a previous monastic community to a caste based family system which encourages people to follow the religion along with other duties of a family.

Caste Hierarchy

The caste hierarchy is more important than religion in a Newar society. Caste is the principle basis of social hierarchy among the Newars. Regardless the religion one follows, a person gets social status or respect by the society according to his caste.³ Even at present, the matrimonial relations with unclean or water unacceptable caste is seen with much hatred and not easily accepted by the society.

Newari caste system is similar to the Hindu caste system based on Hindu principle. The caste hierarchy has different levels. The top most rank is given to priest while merchants and high level government official post holders come in second rank. People engaged with agricultural work stand at third level while seven castes with special traditional profession are at fourth level. Below this are the lower statuses caste which is sub divided into unclean castes. This also in turn was divided into two sections - water unacceptable and untouchable.

About the caste ranking, Chattopadhyay writes a celibate Bandya comes first in the ranking theoretically whereas in practical use the priestly Vajracharyas are given highest ranking.⁴ But in all social and religious ceremonies and other rituals the priests or Bajracharyas occupy highest rank among Newar castes.

These caste hierarchies are shown by restriction on taking food and during marriages.⁵ A person of lower caste can marry and accept food from the caste upper to him but a person of higher caste can neither accept food nor bride from a lower caste especially

³ Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars*, Bombay: Asia Publication House, 1965, pp. 148

⁴ K.P. Chattopadhyay, *An Essay on the History of Newar Culture*, Kathmandu: Educational Enterprises Pvt.Ltd, 1980, pp 5-6

⁵ Nepali, f.n.3, p. 148

from untouchables. In case if he does then he is outcaste and degraded to the caste of his wife. Accepting food is referred only to the cooked one, especially boiled rice. In some caste-groups, smoking *hukkā* also depicts the discrimination between upper and lower caste as people of lower caste cannot smoke from the same *hukkā* that someone higher in caste ranking than him is using.⁶

Vergati correctly mentions that a child born to a low -caste mother and high- caste father gains a lower status than the father and will not be able to take part in any ritual in patrilineal lineage, but if the caste is opposite i.e. low-caste father and high-caste mother, it is not like the writer's opinion which says that the child will gain higher status than that of the father. In such cases, regardless of the higher status of the mother, the child attains the class of the father's and is included in the father's lineage.

Per Low Din in his book gives reasons for declaring a member of a lineage outcaste, the first and foremost being the marriage with another caste, probably lower in status than his own. Any man or woman having marriage with person from lower caste, especially water unacceptable caste, is made outcaste from the *guthi*. However, there are some variations and the writer correctly points out some of them. A woman having matrimonial alliance with a person from water unacceptable caste is excluded from her caste and is never allowed to come back in her family. In case of lower caste only, in lots of cases, such relationship is accepted these days. Personal relationship and the liberal thinking of the concerned people also play vital role in making such relationship acceptable in the society. The interest of outcaste male to get admitted in his wife's community is a bit confusing.⁷ As the writer himself has discussed about the membership in the lineage *guthi*, it is purely based on hereditary convention and so no outsider can join in. The parameter is the same in high caste as well as low caste. But if the husband wishes to join '*Si-guthi*' and '*Sanāguthi*', he can do so if the *guthi* gives

⁶ Nepali, f.n.3, p. 149

⁷ Per Low Din, *Food, Ritual and Society* (Revised Edition), Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998, p. 124

him permission. The '*Si-guthi*' and '*Sanāguthi*' are the *guthis* related with the funeral rites.

***Guthi* system of Newars**

Guthi system of Newars is an important feature of this society. Although *Guthi* systems were prevalent in both Newar and Non-Newar caste in ancient time, it is only Newars who have continued this culture to the present time irrespective to other caste groups. Although some minor *guthis* have collapsed, the main *guthis* are very much alive to a point where these people are unable to imagine the life without them. Gellner in his book supports Toffin's remark that people now are less interested in performing *pūjā* rituals of lineage god and it is not the same as it used to be few decades ago. The reason for this in Toffin's view is because of economic and social changes.⁸ It is even said that this culture of worshipping lineage god is on the way to extinct and will disappear completely in some years.⁹ But in Kathmandu many lineage deity worship group who have left formal *pūjā* ceremony decades ago are reuniting and reviving the culture of lineage deity worship.¹⁰ In contrary to the above conclusion of the writer, the writer himself mentions one example of Shakya group of Nag Bahah which after a lapse of twenty five years again decided to observe lineage deity worship. The reason behind it was the young people from the same group, who no longer knew each other.¹¹

Gopal Singh Nepali in his book has described this feature of Newars. Along with other *guthis*, *digu pūjā guthi* is mentioned in which along with a short description of

⁸ David Gellner and Declan Quigely (Ed.), *Contested Hierarchies*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1955, p. 245

⁹ David Gellner, *Monk, Household and Tantric Priest*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 239

¹⁰ Though majority of families have opted to celebrate their *digu pūjā* in quite a private manner following family disputes, during my field work I came across many families who have reunited even after decades to celebrate this occasion which helped to strengthen the family bond

¹¹ Gellner, f.n. 9, p. 239

the *guthi* he has explained the duties of the *guthi* members and the relation amongst them.¹²

Prayag R. Sharma opines that it was the living style of the Newar people which created the feeling and importance of living and doing things together, and this was the prime reason for the creation of *guthi* system.¹³

Not only Nepali writers but the foreign scholars who have studied newar culture praise this system as

Guthi system of the Newars reflects a culture that places religion at the heart of its preoccupations and activities. There are no ethnic groups in Nepal that devote more time and money to rituals, festivals and offering to the gods than the Newars.¹⁴

Gellner in his book has explained the *guthi* system and its importance in a newar society. The writer also mentions three basic features of *guthi* – the role of territory, seniority order and the public duties of the members.¹⁵

Digu pūjā guthi

Digu pūjā guthi i.e, the *guthi* related with the worshipping of the lineage god among Newars is mentioned in several books by national as well as foreign writers. While mentioning this topic main emphasis is given to the membership issue. The membership in this *guthi* is purely hereditary as no one can join other group's *digu pūjā guthi*. In case of a daughter after getting married she loses her membership in her natal home as she joins her husband's *guthi*. Vergati describes this as

¹² Nepali, f.n. 3, pp. 194-195

¹³ Prayag Raj Sharma, *Kul, Bhumi ra Rajya: Nepal Upatyaka ko Purbamadhyakalik Samajik Adhyan* (Clan, Land and State: A social study of early medieval period of Nepal Valley), Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, 2054 B.S., p. 51

¹⁴ Gerrad Toffin, "From Kin to Caste: The Role of *Guthis* in Newar Society and Culture", Lecture by G Toffin at Mahesh Chandra Regmi lecture series organized by Social Science Baha, September 2005

¹⁵ Gellner, f.n. 9, p. 232

A girl who marries leaves her family to go and live with the family of the husband. Henceforth, she will no longer belong to her original lineage and will have to submit to the obligations imposed on her husband's lineage; in this respect a woman marries not only an individual but also a lineage.¹⁶

But, in case of son the question arises if he gets married to a girl not belonging to a similar caste or acceptable caste. Here in such cases it's the *digu pūjā guthi* members who react first. Low Din quotes Heimen Dorf about how these *guthis* control the social prestige.¹⁷ He writes, "The lineage *guthi* can also be considered as one of the strong unit to control the social disorder in the society".

For the same reason G.S.Nepali describes this *guthi* as real means of upholding the norms of the society within the framework of caste. But Low din's conclusion is a bit different from above two writers. As Low din writes, "Indeed reading Nepali and Haimendorf one is informed that Newari society is strictly governed by *phukī* groups and *guthis*. However this does not accord fully with the reality of 1983."¹⁸

She gives the reason of rapid social change in relation to her above view.¹⁹ There is no doubt that lots of social changes have occurred in society since 1950s', but we still can find the social control over its members by the *guthis* in Newar society. The only difference being that it is not that much strict. Marriage among the equal caste is accepted but in case of marriage between the touchable and untouchable caste, *guthis* react immediately and expel the members. These kinds of reaction from *guthis* have created tension between the elder and the younger generation.

Though in recent years, people who have migrated from the original birth place and settled in new areas have formed some groups to help each other. But these new groups don't replace their membership in the lineage god *guthi*. Where ever they may

¹⁶ Vergati, f.n. 2, pp. 38-39

¹⁷ Low Din, f.n. 7, p. 126

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 127

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 127

stay people must celebrate their *dewāli pūjā* with the same *phukī* who share same patrilineal descent. This function is taken as an occasion to demonstrate the solidarity among the extensive family members in a practical way. A member can break his membership in this *guthi* incase solidarity cannot be maintained but he cannot join new *digu dyo guthi* and worship there. The god and the site remain same but one changes the timing of the worship. Thus the first indication of a spilt in a lineage is provided by the separate performance of *dewāli*.²⁰

Similar point is also mentioned by Gellner as the members of this *digu pūjā guthi* are family members related from patriarchal side. Even if the family gets separated and starts living in a new place, they are always attached with the *guthis* of the locality they were born. They cannot get membership in the lineage god *guthi* of new place.²¹

Phukī (members of *digu pūjā guthi*)

The members of the *digu pūjā guthi* are called as “*phukī*” meaning splitted from a common source. Apart from celebrating the annual *digu pūjā* together these members are bound to follow death and birth pollution also as they belong to the same extended family. These groups are exogamous so marriage among the members is strictly forbidden and also they share the same cremation site. The role *phukī* in any ritual and their duties towards other members of the *guthi* are mentioned by several writers.

Anne Vergati gives a clear definition of the term *phukī* or the members of *digu dyo guthi*, which are listed in five points. These five points include the caste status of the member in the caste hierarchy, the period of impurity in case of death of a member, rules for marriage etc.²² Here, the writer should have included one more point about the membership to this lineage god *guthi* and the reasons which may result in an expulsion of its member.

²⁰ Winfred Ellingsen, “An Appropriation of Place: An Ethnic Territories in Kathmandu, Nepal” Ph.D Dissertation, University of Bergen, p. 219

²¹ Gellner, f.n. 9, p. 232

²² Vergati, f.n. 2, p. 38

Low Din opines that it's the *phukī* members who has a strong control in case of taking decisions for the members who do not abide by the rules and laws of the *guthi* especially during marriages with other caste than own. So these members are in charge to control the social prestige.²³ Along with this responsibility writer also mentions the rituals in which participation of the *phukī* members is compulsory.

Under the heading of Rituals of the *phukī*, the writer describes about the rituals in which the participation of *phukī* members is compulsory. This again is divided into two parts, first one about the annual rites and second one about the life cycle rituals such as birth, marriage, death etc.²⁴ The worshipping of the lineage deity once or twice a year is regarded as the major annual rite in which participation of *phukī* members is a must. Although the rituals related with *digu dyo pūjā* or *dewāli pūjā* described in the book is based on the writer's research and field work of one particular Newar group of Sunakothi village, most of the analysis is common with other Newar communities as well. The writer mentions one interesting fact about the regulation of marriage; that these groups who worship same lineage deity are not exogamous.²⁵ This means they can marry inside the group who worship the same lineage god, but while doing so it should not violate the seven generation rule. In case of Newars of Kathmandu, the *phukī* group is exogamous. Marriage within the *phukī* circle is an offensive act which results in expulsion from the *guthi* membership for both the families.

Under the heading of Life cycle ritual, the writer explains the role of *phukī* in life cycle rituals as in birth, marriage, death and other rituals observed during different ages as *Kayetāpūjā*, *ihī*, *bāhrā* etc. The most important is during the marriage and death. The writer explains the participation of *phukī* in *Gwe kā bhoye* which is necessary among Bajracharyas and Shakyas but in actual it is important among all

²³ Low Din, f.n. 7, p. 126

²⁴ Ibid, p. 129

²⁵ Ibid, p. 120

castes. It is only after this ritual that the newlywed daughter-in-law from whom *Gwe* (Betal nuts) is taken is accepted in the caste and *guthi* of her husband. This ritual is observed after few days of marriage. A special feast is prepared where all the members of lineage *guthi* are invited. The newlywed daughter-in-law gives *Gwe* to all the members. Another ritual more or less similar to above mentioned ritual is practiced by the Shakyas and Bajracharyas. It is called as *Jā Bhoye* which means the feast of boiled rice. All the *phukī* members are invited to attend a special feast containing boiled rice prepared by the newlywed daughter-in-law, after which she is accepted in her husband's caste and *guthi*. Robert Levy defines this *phukī* group as, "The largest patrilineal unit called as clan consists of people who are thought to descend from a common male ancestor whose men and unmarried women share the same surname and who are forbidden to marry each other".²⁶

In his view, "*Kula*" can be expressed in a limited sense to refer one particular group of *phukīs*. But sometimes "*Kula*" may represent clusters of *phukī* units which had split into separate groups but still share the same lineage god and shrine. About the *phukī* members, the writer mentions it as groups of brothers or the male descendants of brothers who had split off from a single ancestral paternal household.²⁷ He further explains these members as

They worship the same lineage god on the same day of the year in the same place. They unite for the performance of major rites of passage for *phukī* members and the feast associated with it, and share major pollution entailed by the death of any of their members.²⁸

The writer also mentions about the *Bā phukīs*. These people are the one who used to be the *phukīs* in the past but by some reason had split from the *phukī* group. They use the same shrine for their annual lineage god worship. They might choose another date

²⁶ Robert Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1990, p. 138

²⁷ Levy, f.n. 26, p. 139

²⁸ Ibid, p. 139

for the celebration. The main difference between *Bā phukī* and *phukī* is that the former is not affected by pollution caused by birth and death in the other *Bā phukīs*.²⁹

This term *Bā phukī* used to denote the *phukī* who have been separated and are celebrating their *digu pūjā* separately is also mentioned by Prayag Raj Sharma.³⁰

Hiroshi Ishii in *Contested Hierarchies* mentions the term '*phukī*' which is used to denote the members having patrilineal relations along with its meaning and functions.³¹ '*Phukī*' is a term which means patrilineally related members split from a joint family. But the writer's comment that '*phukī*' never means lineages seems confusing as patrilineal relation is directly related with lineages. While writing about the meaning and functions of *phukī*, the writer mentions the terms '*bhubā phukī*' (split *phukī*), *tā phukī* (distant *phukī*) and *syā phukī* (close *phukī*).³² The term *bhubā phukī* used for *split phukī* is generally called as *bā phukī* in Kathmandu.

Exogamous nature of *phukī* members

This *phukī* group is always exogamous as they are believed to be offspring from a common source. Not only members of a group who celebrate the *digu pūjā* together but members who share the same shrine and god as lineage god cannot inter marry. Ellingsen has mentioned this in his dissertation as, "Among the Manandhars of Tahiti, not only the members who share the same day and place for the celebration of lineage god but also others who share the same open field and stone images are the exogamous group".³³

As these groups are always exogamous, there are cases where endogamy became prime reason for the split in the lineage groups.³⁴ But, there are groups who practices

²⁹ Levy, f.n. 26, p. 140

³⁰ Sharma, f.n. 13, p. 122

³¹ Gellner David and Deccan Quigely, f.n. 8, pp. 141-142

³² Ibid, p. 142

³³ Ellingsen, f.n. 20, p. 218-219

³⁴ Gellner, f.n. 9, p. 240

endogamy even among the people who share the same lineage god. Gellner gives one such example of Kwa bahah where members can intermarry even if they share the same lineage god; the only prohibition they follow is that they should not observe the *pūjā* ceremony of their lineage god on same day.³⁵

One similar example is mentioned by Low Din in which the groups who worships the same lineage deity are not exogamous. This example is from Sunakhoti village where the members who worship the same lineage deity can intermarry but while doing so it should not violate the seven generation rule.³⁶

Not only this, groups with smaller population are also not always exogamous. Levy mentions one such case in which one of the lower caste Jogi or Kushle have one single lineage god. So this group is not exogamous. But they have different inter marrying sections.³⁷

Similarly, Karranjits of Kathmandu also have one single lineage god. So marriage among the members who worship the same lineage god is accepted but they have different inter marrying section.

Digu dyo (Lineage god)

In most of the Newar families lineage god is represented by a simple line of crude stone. This place where they celebrate their *pūjā* used to be in the outer boundary of the main city area which in process of urbanization now comes inside the city area. In other cases Caitya may also represent as lineage god of certain communities.

³⁵ Gellner, f.n. 9, p. 241

³⁶ Low Din, f.n. 7, p. 120

³⁷ Levy, f.n. 26, p. 723, Note No. 22

As Gutschow writes, “While normally aniconic stones beyond the city limits serve as lineage deities, among Sakyas and Bajracharyas chaityas may also function in the same capacity”.³⁸

He also gives few examples for the same as Sakyas of Michu baha, Sakyas and Bajracharyas of Kwa Baha, and the Buddhacharyas of Swayambhunath Hill.(Fig :23)

Levy in his book defined the lineage god of the Newars as:

Outside the city boundaries in several directions are natural stones, which are the divinities that various extended family groups (*phukī*) worship once a year as their lineage god. These stones are called *digu dyo* or popularly *Dugu dyo* after the goats 'dugu' which are sacrificed there.³⁹

In the above definition, the writer mixes up the word '*digu*' and '*dugu*'. Though the animal sacrificed is called '*dugu*', the correct word for the lineage god is '*digu dyo*', and a goat is called *dugu* in Newari. In fact, there is no relation between *dugu* and *digu*. The writer has classified these lineage gods placed outside the city limits as dangerous deities. The reason for this is that the *pūjā* requires meats and alcohol.⁴⁰ Most of the hindu gods and goddesses are offered meat and alcohol. It is said that some gods take human sacrifices also. In such a condition, it is not fair enough to say the lineage god as dangerous deity only because of the offerings of meat and alcohol.

Not only Levy, Ellingson also has mixed up the words *Digu* and *Dugu*. The writer also writes the word '*Dugu*' instead of '*Digu*' throughout the dissertation. Both the writers seem to be confused by the Newari word '*Dugu*' used for the goat which is sacrificed during the *pūjā*.

³⁸ Neil Gutschow, *The Nepalese Chaitya; 1500 years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley*, London: Axel Menges, Stuttgart, 1997, p. 83.

³⁹ Levy, f.n. 26, p. 260.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 308.

Among the Non Newars each *kula* have their lineage god recognized in Hindu mythology as Siva, Ganesh, Durga etc this identity of gods in Hindu mythology does not affect their role and position as *kula-devata*; as he writes,

Whatever their functions and manifestations in general belief and practice, when they are kul devata, they have only one limited function which is always the same ... (that is) to protect the family from catastrophe and to assure that it will attain wealth, prosperity and male descendant.⁴¹

Time and duration of *digu pūjā*

The time period of April-May is leisure time for the people who are engaged in farming. As Nepal is an agricultural based country, most of its citizens are engaged in this profession. The specific time period when Newars celebrate their *digu pūjā* coincides with this time. The festive season for the celebration of the lineage god worship begins two days before *Akṣaya Tritiyā* and ends on the day of *Sithi Nakha*, a day which marks the beginning of the rainy season. Absence of any other festival during this entire period shows the importance of lineage god among the Newars as they have totally allocated this one and half month period to the celebration of the lineage god *pūjā*. This time period is mentioned by Anne Vergati in her book. Vergati has mentioned it as “Most of the Newars of Kathmandu celebrate their *digu pūjā* from *Akṣaya Tritiyā* (the third day of the month of Baisakh) to *Sithi Nakha* (the sixth day of the month of Jestha).”⁴²

Actually the celebration begins two days earlier than *Akṣaya Tritiyā*. As the Newars celebrate their rituals according to lunar calendar in which every month is divided into two parts or *pakṣas*. First part known as *Śukla pakṣa* ends in a full moon day and the next part, *Krishna pakṣa*, ends in a dark moon day. This festive season starts from the

⁴¹ Lynn Bennet, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic role of high caste women in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 2002, p. 132.

⁴² Vergati, f.n. 2, p. 41

first day of *Śukla pakṣa*. The writer misses to mention these *pakṣas* while writing the third or sixth day of the month.

Sun Sayami in his small booklet about the ritual and culture of Manandhars has mentioned the time period of *Mu* and *Nachā digu pūjā*.⁴³

Manandhar in his book has mentioned the duration of the *pūjā* and its variation among different caste groups.⁴⁴ Previously, the duration used to be 3-4 days and in some rare cases it could be seven days. But nowadays the duration is limited to just 1 or 2 days in most of the cases.

Digu Khya (Puja site)

The open field where the stone images of the lineage god is placed and where people once or twice a year assemble for the *pūjā* of their lineage god is called as *digu khya*. These places used to be in the outer boundary area of the city which now appears in the middle of the extended city. About the open fields where this *digu pūjā* ceremony takes place, Manandhar calls it as '*Mashān* (cremation place) *pūjā*', as most of these open fields are situated near river banks. In some cases, the *pūjā* ceremony is performed secretly. Long before, people used to choose the open places far from the city area, and it might have coincided that some of the open fields are quite near to river banks or cremation site. But this cannot give enough reasons to generalize this *pūjā* ceremony as '*Mashān pūjā*'.⁴⁵

Mu, Nachā, and Nya digu pūjā

Most of the Buddha-margi Newars (specially in Kathmandu) have the tradition to observe their *digu pūjā* twice a year with few groups celebrating one more optional

⁴³ Sun Sayami. *Ye Ya Sayami taye Sankriti wo Sanskar* (Rituals and Culture of Sayamis of Kathmandu), Patan: Nepal Bhasa Kendriya Bibhag, 1121N.S., p. 3

⁴⁴ Jit Bahadur Manandhar, *Manandhar Nibanda Muna* (Collection of essays on Manandhars), Kathmandu: Tara Devi Manandhar, 2060 B.S., p. 169

⁴⁵ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 60

pūjā of the lineage god. The first one which falls during April-May is called as the main one or *Mu* in Newari. The second one which is celebrated after a span of nearly four months is called as *Nachā* and the optional one is called as *Nya digu pūjā*.

Shanti Surav in his book has mentioned all three *digu pūjā* namely *Mu*, *Nachā* and *Nya*. In short, the writer described all the rituals performed commonly by Newars during *Mu* and *Nachā digu pūjā*.⁴⁶ About *Nya digu pūjā*, the writer defines it as an optional *pūjā* observed as picnic and writes that he has not witnessed any *Nya digu pūjā*.⁴⁷ There are many Newar groups in Kathmandu, especially Manandhars, who celebrate *Nya digu pūjā*. Some Maharjan caste people in Kathmandu celebrate similar kind of *pūjā* a day before the last day of main *digu pūjā*. But it is upon the members, who decide whether to celebrate it or not.

Jit Bahadur Manandhar in his book gives his view shares the reason for these additional *pūjās* offered to the lineage god. *Nachā digu pūjā* is the supplementary *pūjā* of the lineage god observed four or five months after the main *digu pūjā*. *Nachā digu pūjā* is observed by almost all the Manandhars of Kathmandu, but according to the writer, this kind of *pūjā* is not common amongst the Manandhars of Bhaktapur, Thimi, Banepa, Kirtipur, Macche ga and Phampi.⁴⁸

The writer's opinion about celebrating *digu pūjā* twice with the interval of four or five months is to offer seasonal fruits and flowers to the lineage god. For this, he gives few examples of the fruits and flowers that are necessary for each *pūjā*.⁴⁹

He also mentions the third *pūjā* ceremony related with lineage god. It is an optional one called as '*Nya digu pūjā*'. Though not compulsory, many Manandhar communities in Kathmandu do have the tradition of observing this *digu pūjā*. In most cases, it is

⁴⁶ Shanti Surav, *Hamro Sanskriti: Ek Sinhawalokan* (Our Culture: An Outlook), Prabhakari Press, 2033 B.S., pp. 103-104

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 106

⁴⁸ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 166

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 166-167

observed after fifteen days of main *digu pūjā*. But the system may vary among different groups. The main difference between this optional *digu pūjā* to the *Mu* and *Nachā digu pūjā* is, it is observed in the main shrine of the lineage god. The writer thinks this kind of practice gives people opportunity to find out many facts about their lineage god and their relations with other groups who also share the same god as their lineage god.

***Bali* (Animal Sacrifice)**

One of the chief features of this *pūjā* is the offering of the animal (*Bali*) to the god. In most of the cases the animal preferred is a goat while people also opt for alternatives. A goat is called *dugu* in Newari and most of the foreign writers are seemed to be confused with the words *dugu* and *digu* used for the lineage god. In many Newar families while offering *Bali* it is not given directly to the main lineage god. This god is considered as *Himafa dyo* or the one to which fresh blood should not be offered. This generally is correlated with the concept of Buddhism where the main lineage god is taken as a Buddhist deity who does not accept animal offering. Manandhar has mentioned this aspect in his book. In *Digu pūjā*, the sacrifice is offered not to the main deity. It is offered to the Ganesh/Bhairava, who stands first in the stones representing lineage god in the outer field. While doing so, a curtain is put to cover the main deity and the eldest male member or *thākuli* pours cow's milk to the main deity.⁵⁰ This ritual of giving sacrifice to Ganesh and putting curtain is similar to other Manandhar communities of Kathmandu. In case of Maharjans, the sacrifice is offered to Bhairava and not to the main deity. But they don't have the tradition of drawing curtain during this ritual.

One unique feature discussed is about the sacrifice of hen along with goat during the *pūjā* among the Manandhars of Laikusal. This kind of ritual is not found among other Manandhars of Kathmandu. The writer also gives examples of Manandhars of Thimi

⁵⁰ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 165

and Banepa, who also have same tradition of sacrificing hen during the lineage god *pūjā* ceremony.⁵¹ The writer does not mention any appropriate reasons for this ritual among the Manandhars of Laikusal.

The writer also mentions one peculiar example of few Manandhar communities of Bhaktapur where the meat of a goat, duck or buffalo are strictly prohibited throughout the *digu pūjā*, while the hen sacrifice is compulsory, two from each household.⁵²

Si Kā bhoye

Si Kā bhoye is a special feast in which the male members according to their age get the specific parts of the sacrificed animal. In case of goat eight parts of the head are distributed while in case of duck only five parts (head, two wings and two legs) are distributed as *Si*. Sharma in his book writes about *Si kā bhoye* as a special feast among the Newars in which the senior male member of each family receives specific portion of the sacrificed animal's head according to their seniority age.⁵³ It is not only the portions of head, as the writer mentions, but the feet and wings (in case of duck) are also distributed. The tradition or rule to get specific portion differs from caste to caste which the writer quotes in the foot notes with the reference of two writers viz Gerald Toffin and Jit Bahadur Manandhar.

Manandhar in his book also has mentioned about this feast but in very short. The writer only mentions that the *thākuli* and the priest get their share of the right eye and nose of the sacrificed goat respectively.⁵⁴ According to him in some cases the right eye is given to the priest so as to give him highest honour. '*Sikābu*' is a very important ritual in *digu pūjā*. Rules on distributing the parts of sacrificed animal vary according to the animal sacrificed or the particular group performing the ritual. In some cases

⁵¹ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 166

⁵² Ibid, p. 166

⁵³ Sharma, f.n. 13, p. 51

⁵⁴ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 168

'Si' is not given to the priest thus making *Si kā bhoye* ' a complete internal feast. All these information are missing in this article.

In the book Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest writer has mentioned about the ritual of *Sikābu* in the notes.⁵⁵ He has just written that the eight parts of the head of sacrificed animal is distributed among eight senior male members of the group. But the parts distributed to different senior members are different in case of different castes. In this connection, the writer mentions the opinion of Lienhard who thinks the word '*sikah*' is derived from the word '*sirah kāye*' meaning taking the head. This opinion of Lienhard is not correct, as the parts distributed in *Si ka Bhoye* are not only the head parts. In case of goat sometimes feet and in case of duck its wings are distributed as '*Si*'. This word '*Si*' rather seems to have been derived from word '*Si*' meaning dead, in which the parts of the dead animal is distributed.

Nepali writes about *Si kā Bhoye* in his book as

The eight senior elders are distinguished from one another by their respective social precedence at the time of the annual worship of the *Dewāli* when each of them is entitled to get his share, a certain part of the head of the sacrificial goat which they have to eat in the ritual '*Sika Bhue*'.⁵⁶

Here the eight senior male members getting the share means eight part of goat's head but the number is low in case if the scarified animal is duck which is not mentioned in the book and also the position of priest who also gets one portion of *Si* during *Si ka Bhoye* is also not mentioned by the writer.

Participation of married daughter

As mentioned earlier the membership of a daughter in her father's lineage ends along with her marriage. After marriage there are certain rules for the participation of a

⁵⁵ Gellner, f.n. 9, Note No. 1, p. 371

⁵⁶ Nepali, f.n. 3, p. 195

married daughter. In some cases she can participate until she becomes a mother while in most of the cases she can participate in the *digu pūjā* of her natal home only once after her marriage. Manandhar in his book has pointed out differences about the participation of married daughters within Manandhar community. The rule is almost similar among all caste in Kathmandu that the unmarried daughters are eligible to participate in their father's lineage god *pūjā* ceremony. But in Bhaktapur, daughters after their *ihī* are treated like married one and hence cannot take part in the *pūjā* ceremony of lineage god at their father's house.⁵⁷

Not only among Newars, among Non Newars also no ladies are allowed to enter the inner sanctuary. Only the initiated male members of the family can enter and participate in the worship.⁵⁸

Admission of new members

Similarly, newly married daughter in law and new born babies are ritually admitted to the lineage on the day of *digu pūjā*. Low din writes that the introduction ritual for daughter-in-law is a must in every caste but for the new born infant, it could differ. In some cases only the male child is introduced, as it is believed that a girl after marriage will join her husband's lineage. In some other cases both are introduced and in exceptional cases both are not.⁵⁹ It is believed that the son automatically gets the membership in the lineage whereas daughters are meant to get married and then join their spouse's *guthi*.

Another important ritual performed during the ritual admission of the daughter in law is taking the *Salā Pā* brought from her natal home. Sayami has mentioned this all

⁵⁷ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 170

⁵⁸ Bennet, f.n. 41, p. 133

⁵⁹ Low Din, f.n. 9, p. 132

under the sub heading of *Bhaumacā duguli dukāyegu*. Writer also mentions the contents of the *Salā Pā*.⁶⁰

Other rituals performed during *digu pūjā*

There are certain other rituals which are carried out on the day of *digu pūjā* or the rituals that are carried out on some other day but in front of lineage god. Bratabandha of a boy is one such occasion. Vergati writes that the ritual of '*dīkṣa*' among Bajracharyas, takes place after vratabanda.⁶¹ But the ritual of 'Vratabanda' is performed only by the Shiva Margi Newars and not by the Buddhist Newars. Instead of 'Vratabanda', Kayeta buja or '*bu san khākegu*' is done. This ritual is performed in front of the lineage god in the open sanctuary on the annual worship day. In case of Bajracharyas and Shakyas, the legitimate male children go through the obligatory process of initiation. But the degradation of caste in case of non-initiation is not true. The writer writes that the non-initiated male child is degraded to a step-lower caste in social hierarchy.⁶² In actual, they are only excluded from their '*ācarya guthi*' or '*sangha*'. This exclusion means that the non-initiated male members lose their privilege to enter and perform *pūjā* at '*Āgam chen*'.

Writer mentions about other ceremonies related with or performed in front of *digu dyo*. These are (a) *Vratabanda* or *Kayetā pūjā*, (b) *Ihi* - the marriage of a Young Newar girl with Vishnu Narayan, and (c) introducing newly married daughter-in-law into the lineage to the deity.⁶³ Of the above mentioned rituals, the rituals of *Kayeta pūjā* and the introduction of a newly married woman to the lineage are obligatory.

But *Ihi* - the marriage of a young Newar girl with Vishnu-Narayan is rarely practised during *digu-pūjā*. The conditions necessary for this is another ritual of '*Thākuli luyegu*'. *Thākuli luyegu* is a special but an optional ritual. It depends upon the will of

⁶⁰ Sayami, f.n. 43, p. 15

⁶¹ Vergati, f.n. 2, p. 43

⁶² Ibid, p. 44

⁶³ Vergati, f.n. 2, p. 45

the *Thākuli* to perform the ritual. On an auspicious day, the *thākuli* performs this ritual, after which, he gets the privilege to perform all other priestly works. This ritual is regarded as the transformation of this special power to the *thākuli* from the lineage god. In this *pūjā*, young girls belonging to the same *digu dyo guthi* may go through a ritual of '*ihi*' but the participation from outside is completely restricted. '*Thi*', which the writer mentions, is the one organized by some particular person or social organization. Here, young Newar girls from different lineage but pure caste may participate together. However, the *Ihi* of a girl is considered complete only when she offers the *salā pā* used during her *Ihi* to the lineage god on the day of *digu pūjā*.

The ritual of '*Thākuli luyegu*' is mentioned by Jit Bahadur which he thinks is the most difficult one than the other *pūjā* ceremonies related with lineage god.⁶⁴ The writer also mentions the main outcome of the *pūjā*. After this ritual the head of the *phukī* or *thakuli* can perform all priestly works during *digu pūjā*. Chaitya Narayan in his interview to Ellingson explained the duty of the *Thakuli*, especially the priestly duties performed after the ritual of *Thākuli luyegu*.⁶⁵

Kula Pūjā

Besides this some writers have also mentioned the *Kula Pūjā* of Non Newars or have compared some rituals of it with *digu pūjā* of Newars. Thakur Lal explains *digu pūjā* as the tradition of Newars only⁶⁶, which is not true. Not only the Newars but the people of other caste do have the tradition of worshipping the lineage god, which they call as '*Kula pūjā*'. The way of celebration may be different, but it is not only the Newars who have this tradition. He also mentions this culture as pre-Aryan one. To some extent, it is true, because we come across the words Rimal Devi and Alam Devi which are supposed to be the names of lineage god of Brahmans and Chetris But the writer's view about the stone images of lineage god in open field seems only

⁶⁴ Manandhar, f.n. 44, p. 168

⁶⁵ Ellingson, f.n. 20, p. 218

⁶⁶ Manandhar, f.n. 1, p. 63

imaginary. The writer on one hand claims this culture as pre-Aryan but on another, he compares the stone images with Siva Linga. Siva was not honoured as god during pre-Aryan period. It was only the Aryans who gave the title of 'Devadideva' to Siva as god among the gods.

Lynn Bennet has described the rituals, role of the priest and *Dhāmi* in the *Kula Pūjā* of Non Newars. The writer thinks that the main obligation towards the lineage god is its *pūjā* celebration or *dewāli*. People may celebrate this *dewāli pūjā* often twice a year or as infrequently. Like Newars, this community also celebrates *dewāli pūjā* far from residential areas. The lineage god's shrine, either permanent or temporary, is situated in secluded spot. It is because the whole *pūjā* is kept secret from the outsiders. If in any case, any outsider comes while performing *pūjā*, they shift their shrine from the next time.

All the *pūjā* is carried out by the *pūjāri*. It is the *pūjāri* who offers the *pūjā* items and also sacrifices the goats and chickens. These all things are done under the direction of the eldest member or headman. All the members along with *pūjāri* should remain pure by fasting. This fasting continues until the whole *pūjā* ceremony is over. Here, the wife of officiating *pūjāri* may not be menstruating at the time of *dewāli*. It is believed that her state of pollution affects the *pūjāri*'s purity.⁶⁷

Another unique feature mentioned in the book is the other official *dhāmi* which is very different from the Newari culture. A *dhāmi* is a person who is supposed to become possessed by the lineage gods during annual *dewāli*. Both before and after the *pūjā* ceremony, the *dhāmi* gets possessed with the lineage god and tells the people about what kind of offerings it wants. Again in the end he tells whether the gods are satisfied or not. In few cases, these *dhāmis* may lead the procession to the lineage god's shrine, and on the way, will be drinking the blood of the sacrificed animal.

⁶⁷ Bennet, f.n. 41, p. 134

The review of the books made above show that plenty of writers' have mentioned about *digu pūjā* culture of the Newars. But the works done in this field seem very less, as not a single book which completely deals with this culture has been published. Most of the articles that have been reviewed above give only the explanatory type of information, as about the rituals, the organization of *phukī* and the rules and regulations during *pūjā*. This research is a different one as beside the descriptive portion of rituals the gender issues and the youth have been added. The views of the younger generation have been sought. A comparative study among Shiva-margi and Buddha-margi Newars as well as with the Non Newar groups who either Buddhists or Hindu celebrate their lineage god *pūjā* as *Kula Pūjā* has been done. Most of the research about the lineage god *pūjā* is conducted among the Newars living outside Kathmandu and Non Newars. This research is focused on the Newars of Kathmandu, who are the principal inhabitants, both within Buddhist and the Hindu communities. Though the younger generation is still so much involved in the celebration of lineage god *pūjā*, the increasing number of it are more or less deviated from it just because of the strict rules that all the members have to go through during the period of *pūjā*. These rules sometimes make these young people to rethink about giving continuation to this unique culture to the next generation. Suggestions have been made on the base of the opinions of the younger generation for simplifying the rules so these younger generations also celebrate this culture with their whole hearted mind. Though the study area is limited to Kathmandu a fresh subject like this in the research of worship of the lineage god, I hope, will be a significant one to provide further studies on the above mentioned subject.

CHAPTER III

Digu Dyo: Lineage God

3.1 Development of Religion: The Nepal Context

According to Oxford Dictionary any religion is belief in existence and worship of a god or gods.¹ Even after entering into 21st century in which science has changed the lifestyle of people with lots of scientific inventions people still are practicing the religious events and their belief in god has not changed. In one of the poll conducted to know the importance of religion in the daily life of people most of the opinion came from the developed countries, in which the percentage of people saying no was far more than the one who thought it to be important.² But in the developing countries like ours, religion plays an important role in every factor of life. All the religion in the world teaches human being about peace, love and unity but it's the small fraction of fanatic people who misinterpret it. Though religion is quite personal thing it has social aspect and social role to play. This belief in god supports man in his difficult time and helps him to come out from sorrow and fear. People remembers god when he is in trouble and when he comes out of any trouble he feels god has listen to his pray. It gives strength to him to combat any problem in life. Even in present most of the social work done are done in the name of religion as religion creates the habit of charity and assures great rewards not only in this life but especially after death. Religion teaches some core moral values which science and technology can never eg. a child from his childhood is taught to obey his parents, should not tell a lie and be honest. Such kind of moral values helps to bind the society in unity. All the religious texts provide the model for living which can help youth to become disciplined and socialized citizens of the society. But contrary to this if we look at the history of world many wars have

¹ A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sixth Edition, 2000, p. 1075.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Importance_of_religion_by_country

been fought in the name of religion, and these religious wars are bitterer than others.³ More interesting is such wars are waged by the religious teachers saying that the death in such wars ensure the real salvation of human being.⁴ Not only wars in few cases King and Princes in line to succession to throne have left the title just because the church did not accept the marriage. In 1936 King Edward VIII of England left the royal title to marry a divorcee.⁵ In a similar case Prince Jason of Holland left his claim to title while being second in row for heir apparent.

In context of Nepal though the percentage of people following Hinduism dominates others in figure, the two main religions present were Hinduism and Buddhism. Though it is said, Nepal remained as an example for religious tolerance there are some incidents caused by religious differences. It is mentioned in chronicles that in early medieval period Shankaracharya from India came in the capital and saw majority of people following Buddhism. He then attacked many Viharas and forcefully made people to live married life thus converting them to Hinduism following *Grihastha Āśram*. Those who survived fled to Tibet which at that time was prime centre for Buddhism. Shankaracharya followed them to Tibet but the religious teacher of Tibetan origin (the Lama) fought with him and killed him in shadow war.⁶ Shadow war is a term used for a war which is fought with tantric power without physical appearance but the loser one dies in real.

Second incident is during the reign of King Bhaskar Malla. Appointment of a Muslim minister was followed by serious riot with killing of number of innocent Muslims. Riot ended only after King altered his decision.⁷

³ H. A. Davis, *An Outline History of the World*, London: Oxford University Press, 1950, pp.315-25

⁴ Surya Mani Adhikari, *Vishwo Itihaas Ko Ruprekha* (An Outline of the World History), Kathmandu: Bhudi Puran Prakashan, 2057 B.S., p.112

⁵ A.W. Palmer, *A Dictionary of Modern History*, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963, p.13

⁶ Bal Chandra Sharma, *Nepal Ko Aitihasik Ruprekha* (An outline of Nepali History), Varanasi: Krishna Kumaridevi, 2033 B.S.(Fourth Edition), p.123

⁷ Rishikesh Shah, *Ancient and Medieval Nepal*, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1992 (First Edition), p. 77.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah expelled the Christian Missionaries when they converted a lot of people to Christianity.⁸

In the 1920s' a Newar of Shrestha caste was expelled for adopting Buddhism. Shrestha is believed to be a Saiva (Hindu) Newar.⁹

Besides these few cases both the ruler and the people of Nepal from Lichhavi period to modern era has stood for religious tolerance. Religious antagonism of any sort was not evident among the adherents of the different religious sects. This can be deduced from the fact that not only father and sons of the same ruling family worship deities of different sects according to their personal preferences, but their wives were also free to worship any deity of choose.¹⁰ During Lichhavi period though the Kings were followers of either Saivism or Vaisnaviam they showed equal respect to Buddhism. "Although Saivism was the religion of most of the rulers (with the exception of Manadeva who was devotee of Vaisnavism) Buddhism, Vaisnavism and the Shakta worship of the cosmic goddesses were in vogue. Both the rulers and the people possessed a highly liberal outlook on religion and his successor to the throne followed the precedent set by him".¹¹ It helped to create bonding between the people with different faiths as at those times king was the center figure and whatever he did was taken as example by his people. Lichhavi King Vrisadev is regarded as a great follower of Buddhist faith and is given credit for the construction of Swayambhu-chaitya.¹² Mana Dev constructed the famous Mana Vihara; another king, Amsuvarma, established a trust for its upkeep and also constructed a new Vihara, Raj Vihara by name. Shiva Dev relinquished throne to lead the ascetic life of a Buddhist monk.

⁸ T.R. Vaidya, Prithvinarayan Shah : The Founder of Modern Nepal, New Delhi: Anmol Publication, 1993, p. 388

⁹ Sarah Levine and David N. Gellner, Rebuilding Buddhism : The Theravada Movement in Twentieth- Century Nepal, New Delhi : Esha Beteille, 2008, p. 43.

¹⁰ Shah, f.n. 7, p. 31.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹² Tri Ratna Manandhar, "Historicity of Swayambhu Chaitya", *Paleswan*, 2009, Vol. 25, p. 1

Narendra Dev always used to wear a belt having an image of Buddha and later retired to a monastery.¹³

Even the Malla rulers were followers of Shaktism but the famous chariot festival of Kumari started by the Malla King Jaya Prakash Malla has a Shakya girl (a Buddhist) as living goddess Kumari the key figure in this whole event. Srinivasa Malla of Bhakapur although a devotee of Shiva bestowed generous land grants on the temple of Bunga dyo (Matsyendra Nath), a Buddhist deity.¹⁴ After the unification of the country, King Prithvi Narayan Shah did not alter anything in the rituals followed and as the head of the state did participated in all the rituals. He knew that such act was most important to keep the religious harmony among its people. This trend was continued till the end of monarchy in 2008 as Shah Kings who are taken as incarnation of lord Vishnu took part in the Buddhist festival of *Samyak* in which they are specially invited and worshipped.

Now Nepal is no more a Hindu state, parliament proclamation of 2008 has made it a secular state. Though there never was any case of serious violence in the name of religion in Nepal people still doubt the government of not being fair in conducting census and giving the exact percentage of people following different religions. Being the minority group in terms of percentage Buddhism followers have always respected Hindu culture and in their own word have assimilated with them. Even at present the Buddhist Newars of the Kathmandu valley celebrate all the major Hindu festivals thus helping to create the strong bond with their Hindu counterparts. But doing this, at some point the younger generation is forgetting their own culture. When asked about their religion most of them answer it as Hindu just because the environment has become so much influenced by this thought of religious tolerance.

¹³ Tina Manandhar, Buddhist Perception of Monarchy and its Relevance in Nepal's Politics", a paper presented at the seminar "Buddhism and the Crises of Nation-States in Asia", Singapore, 2008.

¹⁴ Shah, f.n. 7, p. 85.

3.2 *Kula Devatā and Iṣṭa Devatā*

To define these two terms first we look at the meanings of these words in dictionary. *Kula* in Nepali means lineage and *Devatā* is god so simply *Kula devatā* refers to the god worshipped by certain lineage or lineage god. In Newari *Kula devatā* is called as *Digu dyo*. Newari dictionary suggests the meaning of *Digu* as:

- I. *Digu* is Clan/ Race/Lineage and *dyo* is a Newari word for god. *Digu dyo* is a combination of these two words *Digu* and *dyo* meaning god of a certain clan or lineage.
- II. *Digū* has one another meaning as formal word for lunch specially used for priest as honour. In a Newar society cooked rice has special meaning as it is shared by members of same caste or those who fall in same class hierarchy as accepting cooked rice from other caste specially lower than own is a taboo. Both these can be correlated as *Digu dyo* is the god shared by family members who are permitted to share the cooked rice.
- III. *Degu* is quite similar to *Digu* and is often used to refer the lineage god. The meaning of *degu* as dictionary implies is the patron or the one who looks after for others' well being. So the lineage god is the patron deity of the Newars. As the lineage god is taken as a patron deity it has a distinct value and place in the Newar society.

It is compulsory to offer *pūjā* to the lineage god during any auspicious occasion in the family be it marriage, coming of age ceremony for boys, *Thākulai luyegu* (formal recognition of an oldest person as the head of the lineage), birthday etc. Even among Non Newars there is concept of *Kula Devatā*, and this is the god worshipped by the ancestors and the custom followed by other generations.¹⁵ The *pūjā* related with this god is called as *Kula pūjā*. This *pūjā* is taken as *nitya pūjā* which cannot be cancelled

¹⁵ K.B. Bista, *Le Culte de Kuldevata au Nepal*, Paris: CNRS, p 6

at any cost. Even on the death of any member in the lineage the *pūjā* is just postponed not cancelled. It is believed that performing such *pūjā* ensures healthy and prosperous life of the lineage members.

Among Newars if we trace the history of this *pūjā* there are plenty of reasons which prove its antiquity. First, the natural stones with arches worshipped at the *pūjā* sites at open fields support this view. The metal images which are placed in front of these stones are the later addition. The tradition of worshipping these natural stones with arches as god is a primitive practice of people who started worshipping god because of fear. Participation of family members belonging to different generations in a large circle somewhat reminds us of joint family system which was prevalent during ancient times as there was not any concept of nuclear family.

The importance of this *pūjā* specially among the Newars is shown by the government holiday given to its Newar citizens on their *digu pūjā* day. The sealed order from the Government during the reign of King Rana Bahadur Shah mentions the government holiday for its Newar and Non Newar Staffs separately in which public holiday was given to Newars to celebrate their *digu pūjā*.¹⁶

Not only human beings even gods have their lineage god. The annual *digu pūjā* ritual of these gods is performed on different days. Except *Rāto Matsyendranath* the lineage god of other deities is unknown, but the ritual is performed within the time period of the main *digu pūjā* celebration.

- I. The *digu pūjā* of *Seto Matsyendranath* is performed at the same spot where the image of the god is believed to be found. The priest of *Jana Bahā* performs the annual *dewāli pūjā* of *Seto Matsyendranath*.¹⁷
- II. The *digu pūjā* of *Rāto Matsyendranath* of Lalitpur is performed on the seventh day after the ritual of dropping of the coconut.

¹⁶ The sealed order from the government on the public holidays for its staff issued on 1850 B.S. Marga Sudi 3 Roz 6, as quoted from, Chhita Ranjan Nepali. *Shripanch Rana Bahadur Shah*. Kathmandu : Meri Rajbhandari, 2020 B.S., p. 117-118.

¹⁷ John K.Locke, *Karunamaya: The Cult of Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranath in the valley of Nepal*, Kathmandu : Sahayogi Prakashan for CNAS Tribhuvan University, 1980, p. 159.

The main *digu dyo* (lineage god) of *Rāto Matsyendranath* is located in a small temple at the edge of the pond south of *Gā Bahā*. There are few natural stones regarded as the lineage god of 32 *Pānjus* (priests are called as *Pānjus* in case of *Rato Matsyendranath*). Thirty one along with *Matsyendranath* are considered to be a family or clan and *Yogāmbara* is identified as their lineage god. According to legend it was *Yogāmbara* who predicted the coming of *Avalokiteśvara* to Nepal.¹⁸

- III. Besides these two gods the *Ākāsh Bhairab* of Wangha also celebrates *digu pūjā* and as *prasād ctamari*, *wo* etc are distributed on that day.
- IV. *Digu pūjā* of *Bāka de āju* is celebrated on fourth day of the bright moon of *Baishakh* (*Baishakh sukla caturthi*).
- V. Just four days before the final day of *Sithi Nakha*, *Ikhhu Ajimā dyo* of Bhaktapur also celebrates *dewāli pūjā*.¹⁹

The time period of celebration and natural stones which are regarded as lineage god of these gods are quite similar to the present day images of lineage god found in the open fields. Not only lineage gods, in most of the old temples the main god is just a mould of stone i.e, without any proper image. It is also believed that people intentionally do such so that no one can have any idea of the actual tantric figure of the god. As people thought anyone who is well versed in tantric education can do evil if they get the tantric figure of the god.²⁰ Same theory could be applied to the imageless stone worshipped as lineage god in the open field and the actual tantric deities being worship behind the curtains only by the male members and the *dīkṣit* females (in case

¹⁸ Locke, f.n. 17, p. 271.

¹⁹ Ranjana Bajracharya, “Newar Baudhha Samaj Ma Digu Dyo ra Digu Puja” (Lineage god and its puja among the Newar Buddhist), paper presented at the Fifth International Conference on Buddhist Heritage, April 22-25, 2011, p. 16.

²⁰ Baldev Juju and Surendra Man Shrestha, *Nepa ya Tantric dyo wa Tantric Puja* (Tantric gods of Nepal and tantric puja), Kathmandu : Writer’s themselves, 1105 N.S., p. 4-5.

of some upper castes who have the tradition of taking *dīkṣit* or *dekhā*). But in most of the cases females are not allowed to take part in such secret *pūjā*. It is believed that females cannot hide anything to others and if they have access to the tantric deities the secret *pūjā* may not remain secret anymore. More than that anyone who knows the tantric education could harm them.

Besides *Digu dyo* Newars also worship *Āgam dyo* which is equally important but is worshipped secretly. Even the female members are not allowed to enter the shrine of *Āgam dyo* which usually is inside the house of the head of the lineage. In most of the families it's only the male members who are involved in the *pūjā* of the *Āgam dyo*. In Hindu Newar families and some Buddhist families like Bajracharya, Shakya and Uray *dīkṣā* (called as *dekhā* in common Newari language) is taken. Even for the male members' taking *dīkṣā* is compulsory to become eligible to enter and offer *pūjā* to the *Āgam dyo*. In some cases even the female members are allowed to take *dīkṣā* and the one who had taken *dīkṣā* can enter the shrine.²¹ The rules and regulation that has to be followed once you take *dīkṣā* are very difficult. So in most of the families now it's only the priest who performs the *pūjā* as no one is interested in *dīkṣā*.

As the Newars have *Digu dyo* and *Āgam dyo*, non Newars also have *Iṣṭa Devatā* along with *Kula Devatā* which they worship with equal importance.²² *Iṣṭa* in nepali means the dear one. So *Iṣṭa Devatā* is the god whom you respect a lot and think it is the one who will help you in your trouble time like a true friend. Non Newars specially the Brahmins at the time of male initiation ceremony take the secret mantra in front of the *Iṣṭa Devatā*. Though not similar this *Iṣṭa Devatā* of non Newars can be compared with *Āgam dyo* of Newars. Despite the fact that the cases are very rare but theoretically it is possible to change the *Iṣṭa Devatā* and *Āgam dyo* as it is believed

²¹ Interview with Bijay Dhoj Joshi, on 2067-3-28

²² Interview with Puskar lohani, on 2068-9-19

that this god is worshipped according to own faith.²³ Bajracharyas of Brahmatole have some Buddhist deity as their *Āgam dyo* while their lineage god or *Digu dyo* is Narayan, a Hindu deity. Similarly Shakya (specially of *Na gha*) and some Uray caste families who follow Buddhism have Mahadev as their lineage god but tantric Buddhist deities as their *Āgam dyo*.²⁴ This may be because they were followers of Hinduism but became Buddhist afterwards. After converting into Buddhism they began to worship Buddhist deity as *Āgam dyo* but were not able to change the *Digu dyo* as one cannot change their lineage god. So the cult of lineage god also helps to trace the origin and religion.

While taking the view of people about *Digu dyo* and *Āgam dyo* a contradictory definition came from Uray caste. Though they worship their *Digu dyo* during the same festive season along with other Newar caste, in their opinion this god worshipped is not their lineage god rather it is the *Iṣṭa Devatā*.²⁵ So in some families grandson (from daughter) not only is allowed to participate but carries the chariot of the *Digu dyo* to the *pūjā* site. Inter marriage among the members who celebrate *Digu pūjā* together is acceptable. While inter marriage between the members who worships the same *Āgam dyo* is prohibited. For them the secretly worshipped *Āgam Dyo* is their lineage god. More interesting is the fact that the ritual observed for acceptance of new members in the lineage is done during the *pūjā* of the *Digu dyo*, although for them *Digu dyo* is not the lineage god. One of the informant shared his view in this regard as “ We Uray as far as can be traced are Buddhist, as *uray* word itself means upasak- the follower, follower of Buddhism and how can be our lineage god a hindu deity? So the one which is worshipped behind closed doors is our lineage god as it represents the

²³ Interview with Rajendra man Bajracharya, on 2067-6-11

²⁴ Interview with Daman Shakya, on 2067-6-12

²⁵ All the Uray informants namely Subarna Man Tuladhar, Prem Hira Tuladhar, Prem Shanti shared the same view about this.

faith we follow and we believe that we always have been followers of Buddhism, this concept of *Iṣṭa Devatā* was later adopted.”²⁶

One informant who is also working as a priest of many Manandhar, Maharjan, Mali families said both these *Āgam dyo* and *Digu dyo* are similar. Both the gods are related with lineage as the members who worship these gods are from a single lineage. *Āgam dyo* is kept inside the room while *Digu dyo* is the one which can be carried to the open *pūjā* site. As the *pūjā* rituals for the *Āgam dyo* are secret and cannot be performed in open place.²⁷

3.3 Evolution of Concept of Lineage God

Lineage god is mentioned in Hindu epic of Ramayan and Mahabharat also. Ram, the principal character of Ramayan is mentioned to have been born in Surya *Kula* i.e, in lineage of Surya. While in Janakpur, Nepal there is a temple just beside Ram temple in the same premises which is called as Raj Devi temple. Local people believe that Raj Devi is the *Kula Devi* (lineage god) of lord Ram who brought her in Nepal during his marriage with the princess of Janakpur. It shows the importance of lineage god and its presence in any auspicious occasion. In Mahabharata, Lord Krishna is mentioned as *Chandra Vansé* (from the lineage of Chandra i.e, Moon). Such concept of lineage and one prime deity in that lineage is found mostly in Nepal and India. In southern India this deity called as *Kulaa devam* is worshipped by extended family and pass down the tradition from generation to generation through the male line. This deity deserves the supreme position in any religious function or other auspicious occasions. Though we can't trace the exact date it seems like the tradition of worshipping the lineage god is very old as the rules and regulation of *Kula Devatā pūjā* are mentioned in the old *Hindu dharma śāstras*.²⁸

²⁶ Interview with Subarna Man Tuladhar, on 2068-8-11

²⁷ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

²⁸ Interview with Madhav Bhattarai, on 2067-9-8

Although compared with ancestor worship found in many parts of the world specially China, this worship of lineage god is different from such ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is a way to show respect towards the deceased family members after their death. It is believed that there is continued existence after death and they carry even more special power which will influence the future of the living. This can be compared with *Śrāddha* that is performed in Newar and as well as Nepali society in the name of the dead. While lineage god worships is the worship of a family deity as handed down by the ancestors.

The first document to mention *Kula Devatā* is an early 7th century inscription of Nepal. During Lichhavi period lineage god was worshipped as prime deity along with other gods. The Hadigaon inscription of Amsuverma dated 606 A.D. includes the name *Kula Devatā* along with *Agni Devatā* and *Iṣṭa Devatā*. The royal prefix *Śrī* is also added in front of *Kula Devatā*.²⁹

During the Medieval period in each of the three principal cities of Kantipur, Lalitpur and Bhadgaon there were temples of *Degu tale*, *Taleju*, *Dumāju* and *Māneshwari* inside the palace premises. Out of these four, *Māneshwari* is worshipped as secondary *Iṣṭa Devatā* while *Taleju* being the first one.³⁰ *Dumāju* simply means *devi māju* or the *Lakṣami* i.e, goddesses of wealth and in this case *Rājyalakṣami* (goddesses of wealth of the country). The last one i.e, *Degu tale* is the ancestral deity of the Kings. Still we can see the statue of King sitting with hand in Namaskar position in front of this *Degu Tale* temple.

One of the medieval period inscription dated 1684 A.D. of *Kela Tole* in Kathmandu describes the *pūjā* and feast related with lineage god of Chitrakars.

²⁹ Yagya Nath Acharya. *Kula Tatha Ista Devi Manmaneshwori* (Lineage and Family goddess Manmaneshwori), Kathmandu: Bharat K.C and Ishwor Man Shrestha, 2061 B.S, pp. 35-36

³⁰ Interview with Kashinath Tamot, on 2066-12-3

“N.S.804 Baishakh purnima di kunhu chaitrakar halisihna tha gu naama kwohiti tor mana chhe kimir tina swahasta danta juro shree tin Ista Devatā deguli preetina chhatra dutta tagu jula. Thuki oyegu aayesta katha deguli pūjā kunhu yata pūjā byavastha yana layna dhasa bhojan yaye mala. Tho dutta suna na lov yata dhasa pancha maha patak lai” sambat 804 baishakh masya, śukla pakṣa, purnamayasya titho. Swasti nashetra, vyatipat joge.”³¹

What we can derive from this inscription is *pūjā* of the lineage was compulsory among the above mentioned caste, and there was some fixed asset for the same while feast was optional. As usual warning is given in the last line if someone misused the property.

Besides, one another inscription of medieval period also mentions the word *deghuri pūjā*. This one is during the marriage of Dharma Malla, son of King Jayasthiti Malla. The Devnagari translation of this inscription reads like this

“Yes sal N.S 503 Caitra sukla tritīyā ko din rāti shree shree Dharma Malla Dev ko vivāh bhayo. Nau din pachi Deghuri pūjā ko lāgi jānu bhayo. Jammā cha watā rangā bali dinu bhayo. Khānā bhane khānu bhayena.”³²

[In the year 503 N.S, third day of bright half of the month Chaitra, during night, marriage ceremony of Shree Shree Dharmadev was completed. He went for *Deghuri* puja after nine days, 6 buffalos were killed as offering and he didn't eat anything.]

Though not widely used *deghuri pūjā* can be taken as similar word of *dewāli pūjā* as even today the chariot that is used to carry the image of lineage god is called as *degHUDI* at some places.

³¹ Siddhi Ratna Shakya Bhikchu, “Kwahiti Lagay Chitrakar Pinigu Malla Kalin Chhu Kirti”, Chitrakar Samaj, Jhinchakwagu Taa Mujya, Chhilatho 1126 N.S, 2062 B.S

³² Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Kamal Prakash Malla, *The GopalaRajavamsavali*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, University Press, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, 1985, p.85

3.4 Migratory Nature

Unlike other god or goddesses, lineage god can be shifted from its previous place to new one if the community which worships it migrates. This process is called as *Sālā Yenkegu* (to take away). The Tamak Dyo situated at Jawalakhel at present is the lineage god of the Tamots (Tamrakars). It is believed that this god was first taken to Bhojpur from Lazimpat, Kathmandu as most of the families migrated to Bhojpur during medieval period, which later again was taken back to valley. As most of the Tamrakars stayed at Lalitpur after they came back from Bhojpur, their lineage god which they carried along with them was also established at Jawalakhel.³³ Actually the name of this goddesses is *Ugra Chandi* but as it was carried in a special vessel made of copper (Newari. *Sija*, Nepali. *Tāmā*) it was later called as Tamak Dyo. Even some twelve years back i.e, from 2001 A.D. a group of people (Mali) from Kirtipur changed the site of the lineage god as the previous site was far and also not so clean area.³⁴ (Plate: 22). It is said that a special *pūjā* should be performed in the new place. Astrologers are consulted beforehand about the place and if necessary a little portion of clay is also examined by the astrologers. Though they have stopped offering animal as *Bali*, for the first time in a new place, sacrifice of an animal specially a goat is compulsory and it was duly followed when they first celebrated their *digu pūjā* at the new site.³⁵ The Maharjans and Shakyas of Kathmandu who worship Kusheshwor Mahadev as their lineage god celebrate their *digu pūjā* at Kuleshwor where they have made a replica of the original one. The present generation doesn't exactly remember from when it all started at Kuleshwor but they share a story when asked about this change in place to celebrate the *digu pūjā* (see Chapter IV). The *pūjā* sites where Chitrakars celebrate their *digu pūjā* are also the new ones. According to 92 year old Chitrakar informant most of the places where the Chitrakar celebrates their *digu pūjā* are the new ones. The Chitrakars of Bhimsenthan celebrate their *digu pūjā* at Chabahil

³³ Interview with Kashi Nath Tamot, on 2066-12-3

³⁴ Interview with Lila Mali, on 2067-3-5

³⁵ Interview with Chandra Bd.Mali, on 2066-12-3

but this place was later adopted. This group used to go Sakhu for the same celebration. The group which celebrates *digu pūjā* at Mahakalsthan, are originally from Dumja and have their lineage god at Dumja.³⁶ Not only on the specific day of *digu pūjā*, people worship lineage god in every special occasion like marriage, birthday, coming of age ceremony for boys etc. The *ihī* ceremony of Newar girl is completed only after the girl offers the *Salā pā* which is used during the *ihī*, to the lineage god. Coming of age ceremony for boys is performed during the *digu pūjā* but such trend is found only among Maharjans and Manandhars.(Plate: 17). Among the non Newars specially in the rural areas still people offer the first harvest or anything which is cooked for the first time to the lineage god.³⁷

3.5 Social Implication

There are few proverbs which help to explain the importance of lineage god in a Newar society. “*Digu dyo ballā ki bamalā*”, this is very common proverb which literally means is your lineage god strong? This can be interpreted as the lineage god is the one who supports you in your tough time. It is taken as that unseen force which helps you to come out of your tough times. If a person is very ill or starting new business or getting married, an astrologer is consulted with his/her horoscope. If the position of the lineage god is strong then it is believed that everything will be alright.

“*Digu dyo pāli lā*”, this is another proverb which means the position of the lineage god is very low. *Pāli* means feet in Newari, if an astrologer says something like this about an ill person then it is believed that the chances of recovery are very little for that person. In such cases special *pujā* is offered to the lineage god. This *pujā* material includes *Jau* (Barley), a small portion of gold, small piece of yellow cloth. And this offering is made on Thursday. Thursday is called as day of Brihaspati, guru of the gods and lineage god also holds an important place as a teacher in one’s life so this day is chosen as the day to offer special *pujā* to the lineage god.

³⁶ Interview With Indra Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

³⁷ Interview with Puskar Lohini, on 2068-9-19

In addition to these, a person is nicknamed as *Digu dyo* of someone if he/she helps that person unconditionally, cares and support. This means our lineage god also helps us when we are in trouble. Another proverb is related to the feast. “*Chawase Digu pūjā*”. *Chawasa* is a place which is found in each Newar locality. Long back when deliveries were done at home it was compulsory to leave the placenta at that place just to mark that a new family member is born in that locality. Not only birth, during marriage of a daughter, or son, a special feast is offered in that place (*Chawasa*). After death of any person a pair of clothes of the deceased is also left there. This proverb is used when someone wears outfits that are not suitable to that occasion.

One instance is noteworthy to mention here. When Ranodeep Singh became prime minister of Nepal in 1878 A.D., he first gathered his fellow ministers and chief army officers who were his brothers, cousins to take an oath to be sincere to him as well as to the state in front of their lineage god. This action known as “*dharma bhākeko*” (an oath of allegiance) clearly shows the importance of the lineage god. As the political situation was very turbulent at that time when he became Prime Minister he thought of doing this so that no one could harm him or do something wrong once he takes the oath before his lineage god.³⁸

³⁸ Triratna Manandhar, *Nepal: The years of Trouble*, Kathmandu : Purna Devi Manandhar, 1986, p.82

CHAPTER IV

Lineage God and The Newars

4.1 History of Newars

Newar is a term referring to a collective group of people of different castes who speak a common language and share a common yet diverse culture. Before the unification of the country in 1769 A.D. by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the word 'Nepal' referred only to the three big cities in the hub, namely Kantipur, Bhadgaon and Patan. The main inhabitants of these three cities were Newars. With respect to the religion they follow, Newars are divided into two sections - Shiva-margi and Buddhists sections. The differences between these two sections are less significant than the similarities that they have.

On the topic of history of Newars, few researchers have put forward a different view. According to them, the Newars have proved their identity from ancient times. *Gopāl*, the first royal dynasty according to legendary accounts is thought to be the ancestors of present day *Sāpu*¹, the cow herds. The second royal dynasty, *Mahispāla*, was also of the same group but the only difference was that the *Gopāl* were cow herds whereas *Mahispāla* were engaged with buffaloes. After the *Gopāl* and *Mahispāla* dynasty, history shows that this country was governed by the Kirats. And according to Mary Slusser, these Kirats are also the ancestor of present day Newars.² Likewise, these researchers have also shown relation between Newars with the Lichhavi rulers. This, they say, is on the basis that the places where most of the Lichhavi inscriptions were found are densely populated by Newars. Besides this, the places where the inscriptions were found are the sites of lineage god worship for most of the *Jyapū*

¹ Padam Shrestha, *Newa (Newars)*, Kathmandu: Syasha Samaj, 1125 N.S., pp. 18-19.

² Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 9.

castes of Kathmandu. The dress code of the people in those days that the Chinese Travellers have told of quite often, matched with the old Newari style of dressing.³

Besides these theories, notable researchers have also tried to show the history of their respective castes. Buddhism was very popular during the Lichhavi period as we find that many Lichhavi rulers donated a lot for the construction and continuity of Vihars. As such, the present day Bajracharyas opine that Bajrayana sect was popular during Lichhavi period.⁴ Similarly, Prajapati, one of the sub castes of Jyapū whose main profession is Pottery (to make clay items), claim that people of their caste were present in the valley during N.S. 316 (1196 A.D.).⁵ It is said, on the basis of that of, a big clay-pot (which represented the god Pachali Bhairava) was used during the festival of Pachali Bhairava which was started by King Guna Kam Dev in N.S 316 (1196 A.D).

The word *Uray* used by the merchant group of Buddhist Newars say that the meaning of this word is *upasak* or the follower. They think their ancestors were the followers of Buddha and their history is as old as the Buddhist religion in Nepal. *Dhobi* (laundrymen) are the unclean caste in caste hierarchy. They relate the term *dhobi* which was used in the epic *The Rāmāyan*.

Khadgi (New. Naye) think they came to the valley with Nanya Dev in N. S. 9 (889 A.D., 811 Saka Era) from Nayar region of Karnataka, India.⁶ There is one interesting story about the profession of these people. When Hari Singh Dev of Simraungrah escaped from there, following the attack of Gayasuddin Tuglak, they didn't have anything to eat. So the King worshipped the lineage goddess *Tulajā Bhavāni* who in reply said, "Whatever you find tomorrow morning, offer it to me and take it as my

³ Babu Ram Acharya, Nepal, Newar ra Newari Bhasa (Nepal, Newars and Newari Language), *Nepal Sanskritik Parisad patrika*, year-1, vol-1 Baishak 2009 B.S. p.11.

⁴ Phanindra Ratna Bajracharya, "Bajracharya Samaj"(Bajracharya Society), *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu : Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., p. 216.

⁵ Surendra Bikram Prajapati, "Prajapati (Madhyapur Thimi)", *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu : Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., p.193

⁶ Shrestha,f.n. 1, p.62

blessings”. They found a buffalo in the jungle and there arose the question of who will kill that. In the mean time, the youngest son of the King showed the courage to hold the *Khadga* (sword) and kill that buffalo. The King was so pleased with the bravery of his son that he offered the title of Khadgi (one who holds *Khadga*) to his son and the present day Khadgi are the offspring of that Prince. *Dyolā*, another unclean caste, whose major population is found around the old city area, have their view about their settlement. In their view, they were the warriors for the Kirati Kings and fought until the end and so the Lichhavi rulers recognizing their bravery, ordered them to settle around the city area so that they can check with any attack in the city.⁷

Besides these kind of interpretations, the term “Newar” is first seen in “Narapati Jayacharya Swarodaya” of N.S. 739 (1619 A.D.).⁸ However, we can find plenty of inscriptions which mention the present day Newar caste even before this date. Inscription of Changu Narayan, dated N.S. 357 (1237 A.D.), mentions about *Guthi* established by ‘Udayshree Mandhri’,⁹ while similar to Mandhri, Mandhur is found in inscription dated N.S. 485 (1365 A.D). Similarly, ‘Jagat Mandhur’ is mentioned in the Gopal Raj Vamshavali.¹⁰ All these words have similarity with one of the present day Newar caste Manandhar. Historians also agree that the term Manandhar was gradually developed as Manadhar, Mandhur, Manandhra, Manandhal and Manandhar. The surname Sayami frequently used by Manandhars was later adopted by the Manandhars following their traditional occupation i.e, production of oil in *Sāl* (a place where mustard oil is produced specially by Manandhars). The owner of the *Sāl* was *Sāلمي*, which in due course of time became Sayami. The word *Sāلمي* is first found in

⁷ Maila babu Dyola, “Dyola Jati (Dyola Caste)”, *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., p. 138

⁸ Prem Shanti Tuladhar. *Nepal Bhasa Sahitya ya Itihas*, (History of Newari Literature), Kathmandu : Nepal Bhasa Academy, 1120 N.S., p. 5

⁹ Jit Bahadur Manandhar, *Manandhar Nibanda Muna* (Collection of Essays on Manandhars), Kathmandu: Tara Devi Manandhar, 1124 N.S., p.8

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 1

document of N.S. 720 (1600 A.D.), in which, *Sālmis* of Banepa, Bhaktapur and Panauti made some social rules and regulations.¹¹

Inscription dated N.S. 405 and 454 (1285 and 1334 A.D.) have the word “Jugi” which is one of the unclean castes (previously) of Newars.¹² Copperplate inscription of N.S. 696 (1576 A.D.) mentions a person ‘Jitaj Tuladhar’ of Asan who performed the great Buddhist festival of Samyak at GunaKirti Mahavihar at Thimi.¹³ Stone inscription of Hadigaon dated N.S. 709 (1589 A.D.) has a name Jikush Prajapati who contributed a lot in building a *Falcā* (Nep. *Pati* -, Eng- inn), a small house usually built near a stone conduit for social and religious cause) at Hadigaon.¹⁴ Stone inscription dated N.S. 535 (1415 A.D) of Alko hiti Patan, which is written in Newari language urges people who used that water conduit were duty bound to keep that area clean and take care of the public asset. Failing to do such would be considered a great sin.¹⁵ These all are examples of inscriptions which mention Newar castes before the collective term Newar was used for these castes. During the Medieval period, we can find much more inscriptions which either mention Newar caste or are written using Newari language. So it can be said that during that period, as much of the population of the valley were Newars, Newari language was used to create awareness also among the general public.

4.2 Religious Affiliation

Religion always secures a high place in Newar society. Their life always is governed by the religious beliefs. Though considered as a single group on the basis of the similar language, culture and social organization, these people are internally divided

¹¹ Prem Sayami, “Manandhar(Sayami) Samudaya ya Mhasika” (An introduction to Manandhar Community), *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., p. 259

¹² Sudarsana Darshandhari, “Kapali”, *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., p. 28

¹³ Purna Tamrakar, “Uday Samaj Wa Uki Ya Lapu”(Uday Society and it’s Path), *Uday Sama Khwa Pau*, Vol-4, No-13, Kathmandu, 1123 N.S., p.23

¹⁴ Prajapati, f.n. 5, p.193

¹⁵ Tuladhar, f.n. 8 p. 20

into two groups. Newars have been divided into Buddha- margi and Shiva-margi.¹⁶ Buddha Margis are the followers of doctrine of Buddha while Saivites are the one who follow the doctrine of Siva (a branch of Hinduism). Generally speaking, the term Hindu and Buddhist Newars is used to define them. It's the employment of the priest which distinguishes the religion that they follow. Buddha- margi Newars have Bajracharya as their priest who has right to conduct every ritual from birth to death. If a family wants to change the priest then they must take the consent of their family priest for the same. Newar Buddhism can be taken as combination of all three sects of Buddhism. Buddha- margi Newars are composed mostly of *Māhāyāna* sect while their priest are followers of Bajrayana. These *Māhāyāna* disciples equally pay respect and make offerings to the *Theravāda* monks too. From the families of these *Māhāyāna* disciples, people send their son/daughter to become monk/nun and this tradition is followed even in present days. Among the Shiva-margi Newars, it is Rajopadhyay Brahmin who work as the priest for them along with Karmacharya who helps them in tantric pujas or homa, and Joshi and Karranjit who have certain role in death purification rituals among these Shiva-margi Newars. Some Shiva-margi families still need Bajracharya priest for the death rituals.¹⁷ Such examples implies that before many generations, these families (who needs Bajracharya for death rituals) were also Buddhists, and they might have migrated and settled somewhere that they were unable to find a Bajracharya priest and conducted their rituals as the locals did. But the death rituals are such in which a traditional Newar never wants to compromise. They think it is the last ritual which will place the deceased one in the heaven. So for this, their generations have kept that tradition to conduct last rituals by the Bajracharya priest.

Another way to find out the religion is to ask a Newar about his *Gotra*. Followers of Shiva-margi have a definite answer to such question while Buddha- margi do not have

¹⁶ David N.Gellner,) *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest*, New Delhi:Foundation Books, 1994, p.52

¹⁷ Interview with Rajendra Man Bajracharya, dated- 2067-6-11

such gotras. But nowadays where much of the Buddha- margi families (especially lower than priests but higher class in general) are involved in many religious acts related with Hindu religion have started to say that they belong to *Kashyap Gotra*. As nowadays Brahmin purohits are also called in by Buddhist families to perform religious rituals, they have created this kind of trend that anyone who do not have or forgot the *gotra* belong to *Kashyap Gotra* as in their opinion *Gotra* is a must while performing any religious act according to Hindu tradition. Buddha- margi Newars never send *Gai* during the festival of *Gai jatra* (besides some exception in Jyapū caste) in the name of the deceased one. While Shiva-margi Newars do not have the ritual of *Upāku Wanegu*¹⁸ done for the same which Buddha- margi families do during Indrajatra.

Main Buddhist festivals include *Panjra* (Pancha Daan) and *Samyak*. *Panjra* is observed during the Buddhist holy month of *Gunlā*. During this month, many Buddhist families have another *guthi* in which they make Buddhist stupas from clay for the whole month and undergo certain restriction in taking food items. Generally *Samyak* is held once in every 12 years in Kantipur, and once in every 5 years in Lalitpur, while anyone interested to organize *Samyak* can do it as *Yiechik Samyak* which does not need specific time period.

For a Buddhist boy, his initiation ceremony (*Kayeta pūjā*) is a simple one which is done during the lineage god puja while among the Shiva-margi Newars it is quite similar to Hindu non Newars which they call as Bratabanda and is observed in a grand way. Another notable feature is the paintings that are painted (nowadays stuck) in the main entrance door during the marriage of the son. *Pancha Buddha* (five dhyani buddhas) along with other auspicious marks or emblems as *kalash*, fish etc is seen in a Buddhist family while images of Ganesh, Kumar, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwor with Parvati along with similar auspicious marks can be seen in a Hindu family. Time

¹⁸ A Ritual performed by a Buddhist Newar family of Kathmandu City during the one year mourning year in which they take a round of outer boundary of old (medieval) Kathmandu City by lighting small lamps in the name of the deceased person in the family.

has changed and so have the traditional values. Now much of the Buddhist families have come under much influence of Hindu religion and such changes are found mostly in the middle class Buddhist families. They are much involved in religious acts as Saptaha puja, Satya Narayan puja in which they employ Hindu Brahmin, and also take pleasure to visit the main Hindu shrines of India.

4.3 A Glimpse of Newar Ritual and Festivities

The Newars of Kathmandu are very rich in culture. In a way the words Newars and culture are inter-related to each other. They observe a number of rituals and festivals throughout the year and participate in many fairs and festivals with joy and enthusiasm. To begin with the month of Baishakh (mid- April) on the very first day of the year, they, in the early morning visit *Sapan Tīrtha*, a holy place of dreams, at Tokha in the north of Kathmandu and take a bath to gain a new vigor and strength. After a few days, they observe mother's day offering sweets and gifts to mother. Persons, whose mother has already expired, take a bath at *Mātā Tīrtha* and give donations in the name of their late mother to mark their respects towards her.¹⁹

After a few weeks during May a long festival of Red Machhindra Nath, god of rain is observed by Newars of Kathmandu Valley. Although it is a local festival of Lalitpur, the Newars of Kathmandu also actively participate in it. At about the same time, another ritual is observed which is known as *Sithī nakha* or *Kumār Śasthi*, the birthday of warrior-god Kumar. It is specially significant because it also marks the last day of the *digu pūjā* season which begins nearly six weeks before.

The months of July and August are full of rituals and festivals for the Newars. First comes the *Gatha Mugha* or *Ghantā Karna* popular taken as a night of Witch and Ghosts. The Newars observe this ritual to purify their home from evil spirit by offering *Bau* in the evening. This *Bau* contains *chokā baji* (small pieces of beaten rice) along with *hi, son* (blood, raw meat) and other things that are offered to the evil spirits. They

¹⁹ Mary Anderson, *Festivals of Nepal*. New Delhi : Rupa & Co, 1997, p.52

also nail iron nails in the main entrance door so that evil spirits stay far from their house. From the very next day a month long festival of *Gunlā* begins, which is marked as a holy month for the Buddhist Newars. The Buddhist Newars follow strict dietary rule so as to ensure they don't take any food that is considered as impure specially chicken, egg, tomato, garlic and certain other things like cucumber, pomegranate etc. For the whole month they visit Swayambhu Mahachaitya in the morning, and also make small *chaityas*²⁰ from clay. These are collected for the whole month and on the last day after performing *pūjā* these *chaityas* are immersed in the nearest holy river.²¹ In the Midst of this month come certain festivals like *Gum punhi*, *Sā pāru* and *Panjrā*. *Sā Pāru* or *Gai Jatrā* is basically a Hindu festival in which procession is sent from the house in the memory of the deceased persons. Buddhist Newars also take a round of city specially visiting the *Viharas* of Kathmandu in the memory of the deceased family members.

In the month of September, the Newars of Kathmandu pay their respect and show their love by offering sweets and gifts to their father. People whose father is not alive go to *Gokarna* and make offerings in the name of the deceased person. The other festival that Newars celebrate is *Gaṇeś Caturthi* or *Cathā* in their native language. While observing this festival it is believed that if someone does not look at moon in the evening he might have to face the charge of thief even if he had not done something wrong. Such saying is based on the story of Moon and Ganesha.

This festival is followed by a weeklong festival of *Indra Jātrā* in which number of Newar castes is involved in one way or other. The festival begins with erecting a long pillar called as *Indra Dhoj* at Kathmandu Durbar square. The famous chariot festival of Ganesha, Bhairab and living goddess Kumari is the main attraction of this festival. Along with that various traditional dances are performed by the Newar community, chief among them are *Saobhaku* dance by Putuwars of Halchowk, *Lākhe* dance by the

²⁰ Another word for Stupa, which came into use to indicate the specific meaning of a shrine.

²¹ Personal observation

Ranjitkars of Majipat and *Pulukhsi* dance by the Jyapūs of Kilagal of Kathmandu. The other rituals observed by the Newars on this occasion are *Dāngi*, *Baumata* and *Upāku wanegu*. It was during the Indra Jatra festival, the Malla dynasty was overthrown by the King of Gorkha. But the new ruler continued the weeklong festival considering the sentiments of the people.²²

Two big national, but traditional festivals are observed in the month of October and November, and they are *Mohahi* (*Dashain*) and *Swanti* (*Tihar*). Though *Mohahi* is taken as National festival, the Newars observe it in a different way, which is supposed to be a legacy of Malla rule.²³ For nine days the Newars visit nine sacred rivers of Kathmandu city in early morning. They take bath and worship the nearest *pitha* (abode of mother goddess) and offer *pūjā*. This is called as *Navaratha* or nine nights. Newars and Non Newars observe *Swanti* in a similar fashion, but the *pūjā* ritual is different. On this occasion Newars prepare a specially decorated Mandala through which all the ritual are carried out. On Kartika sukla pratipada, the Newars celebrate the occasion of New Years' day of Nepal Sambat started in 879 A.D. and performs *Mha Pūjā* a unique ritual of worshipping self found only among Newars.

In the month of December, the Non Newars observe *Bālā Caturdashi* ritual in the Pashupati Nath temple area, while the Newars on the same day celebrate *Indrāyani* festival in Kathmandu city.²⁴ After a week, the Newars of Kirtipur observe a festival popularly known as *Nhe gan yā jātrā* (festival of seven villages).

In the month of December, Newars celebrate *Yomāri Punhi* by making a special kind of sweet *Yomāri*. It is made with rice flour with caramel filling in conical shape. Along with offering to the gods some specially shaped *Yomāris* are also made. These

²² For details see Satya Mohan Joshi. *Nepali Chadparva* (Nepali festivals), Kathmandu : Royal Nepal Academy, 2039 B.S. pp. 1-33

²³ Hari Ram Joshi, *Nepal ka Chadparvaharu* (Festivals of Nepal), Lalitpur : Joshi Research Institute, 2060 B.S., p. 130.

²⁴ Tina Manandhar "Indrayani Jatra: Bala Caturdashi ko ek bhinnai rup" (Indrayani Festival : A different aspect of Bala Caturdashi), *Matina*, Vol 2., Issue 7, August 2008.

are believed to be the symbol of the product of new harvest. It is believed that days becomes longer from this very day.

On the first day of *Magh* (mid January), the Newars observe a ritual known as *Ghya-Chāku sanlhu* in which a mother gives blessings to her children by rubbing mustard oil on their head and offering traditional Newari sweets (*Ghya*, *Chāku* etc) wishing for their happy and prosperous life. Though this ritual is observed with in a family the Newars gives much importance to this ritual as married daughters and sons if staying far from their house visit their mother's place to get her blessings.

In the month of March, the Newars observe a three day festival known as *Pichasa Caturdashi*. It is a festival of mother goddesses (*Azimā*), but on this occasion *Luku Mahadyo* (hidden Mahadev under the surface of earth) is also worshipped.²⁵ At about the same month, the festival of white Machhindra Nath is also celebrated by the Newars of Kathmandu.

The above mentioned rituals and festivals are normal in the life of Newar. So far the *digu pūjā* is concern it is limited in a family and every family observes it in different days. The puja rituals are also slightly different various caste groups. But, the main the objective of *digu pūjā* is the same and that is to worship the lineage god for the happy and prosperous life. Unity in Newar family lies in the successful observance of lineage god worship.

4.4 Caste Hierarchy

The caste hierarchy is more important than religion in a Newar society. Regardless the religion one follows, a person gets social status or respect by the society according to his caste. Even at present, the matrimonial relations with previously unclean or water unacceptable caste is seen with much hatred and not easily accepted by the society. The couple is totally rejected by the family and society. In such cases it is not only in

²⁵ Anderson, f.n. 19, p. 264

the Newar families but also in non-Newar families that the couple is seen with much hatred but the level is quite different. This shows the importance of the caste in Newar families.

Newari caste system is similar to the Hindu caste system based on Hindu principle. The caste hierarchy has different levels. The top most rank is given to priest while merchants and high level government official post holders come in second rank. People engaged with agricultural work stand at third level while seven castes with special traditional profession are at fourth level. Below this are the lower status castes which are sub divided into two unclean castes as water unacceptable but touchable and water unacceptable and untouchable.

Until the promulgation of 1963 civil code the term “untouchable” was used in the civil code itself. The lower castes were divided into two categories and if a higher caste person touches the untouchable one he has to take a customary bath for ritual purification.

The division of caste into higher and lower status probably started after the Malla King Jayasthiti Malla divided the caste according to their profession in the name of reorganizing the society or it may be termed as codification of tradition with suitable changes.²⁶ In this work, he took help from Brahmins of India. According to the Vamsabali the five Brahmins who were called for this cause were: Kirti Nath Upadhyay, Raghunath Jha, Shri Nath Bhatta, Mahi Nath Bhatta and Ram Nath Jha.²⁷ That being the reason, the caste ladder made during the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla resembles most of the features of Hindu Society. Among the Newars, this five level caste hierarchy runs simultaneously among Shivamargi Newars and Buddhamargi Newars.

²⁶ Chandra Bikram Budhathoki, Jayasthiti Mallaka Sudhar (Reforms of Jayasthiti Malla), Lalitpur:Sajha Pakashan, 2039 B.S, p.3

²⁷ Gopal Pokharel Bibas, *Nepal Adhirajyako Itihasik Britanta*(Historical account of Kingdom of Nepal), Kathmandu:Bina Pokharel, 1988 A.D., p.125

	Shivamargi Newars	Buddhamargi Newars
Priest	Rajopadhyay, Karmacharya	Bajracharya
High	Joshi & Shrestha	Shakya & Uray
Upper Lower		Jyapū
Lower		Ranjitkar (Chhipa), Malakar (Gathu), Manandhar (Sayami), Nakarmi (Kau), Dali (Dui), Chitrakar (Pu), Tandukar (Khusa)
Unclean Caste		
Water unacceptable Caste / Untouchable		

The caste status is especially marked while taking food or making matrimonial relations. People belonging to upper castes cannot or do not accept food, especially boiled rice from lower castes. Cooked rice is only shared by the close family members or relatives. The importance is best shown by one ritual practiced by the merchant group of Newars, Uray. These people used to trade in Tibet for which they stayed there and came back after few years. In this ritual the person who stayed in Tibet for

business purpose should cook and serve boiled rice to his *phukī* members and other close relatives. Until the completion of this ritual, the person is not entitled to perform or participate in any ritual as Uray.

Though different this practice can be compared with *pāni patiyā* (purification ritual) which was performed for the readmission to the caste of the Gurkhas who have outcasted themselves by going overseas.²⁸ Among Non Newars such practice was not much in use due to opposition by the priest and religious pundits who were determined not to grant to the soldiers who have crossed the ocean and lived in western world. However after World War I and II more and more Hindus especially the Elite group travelled Europe and the priest class made no more difficulties to this issue.

Among Maharjans, not only cooked rice but smoking from same *Hukkā* also resembles close relations, who can dine together.²⁹ In old days Newari style houses usually have their kitchen in the upper most floors which ensures the entry of the eligible one in the kitchen as during those days people marked these things minutely.

Daughter in law who is lower in caste is not allowed to cook or serve boiled rice; neither is entered in *digu pūjā guthi* i.e, given membership in *phukī*. In case of her death no one in her husband's *phukī* follows the death pollution. The entire arrangement for cremation is done by her husband and children. But nowadays some of the castes which do not have strict rules for *Si Guthi* help in cremation as social service but do not follow the death pollution.³⁰ When a man marries a woman from lower caste, his own caste is degraded to the latter's. He is first expelled from *digu pūjā guthi* which results in expulsion from all other *guthis*. A child born by such

²⁸ Asad Hussain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd: London, 1970, pp.198-200

²⁹ Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars*, (Reprint) Kathmandu: Himalayan Book Sellers, 1988. p.149

³⁰ Interview with Prithi Narayan Mali, on 25 May 2010

union generally takes the lower caste or even they can take an intermediate one eg- A child born from union of Manandhar and any other caste writes Lawat as their caste.

Priestly caste occupies highest rank in caste hierarchy. Individuals belonging to these castes are responsible to carry out the religious functions. These castes are taken as sacred castes. Rajopadhyay and Karmacharya are the priests in Shiva-margi Newars while Bajracharya performs as priest in Buddhist families. Joshi who act as astrologers, though ranked as Shresthas in high class, do also have some priestly role in Shiva-margi families specially in death rituals.

Rajopadhyay are called as Newar Brahmins who are eligible to wear sacred threads and perform puja rituals according to vedic ways. It is said that the ancestors of these people are originally from Kannauj, India.³¹ The Malla rulers of Kathmandu valley brought them here from Simraungarh and made them their priest. That being the reason, the prefix 'Raj' is added to their original surname of Upadhyay meaning priest of the King (Raja). But according to Baldev Juju, the actual reason for such saying that Rajopadhyay are from Kannauj is just because the methods of performing ritual acts by them and Brahmins of Kannauj is similar.³² Besides this similarity, there is no other strong evidence that supports this saying. In his opinion, the history of Rajopadhyay Brahmins can be traced back to Gopal dynasty- the first royal dynasty. He further adds that the Gopal dynasty and origin of Pashupati Nath are correlated. Vedic style puja was offered to Pashupati Nath and the non-Newar Brahmins who can perform puja in vedic way came to the valley much later after the unification of the country. So it was Rajopadhyay Brahmins who did this during those days. Much after that the Malla rulers appointed them as royal priests. There are few other reasons which support his view. Changu Narayan inscription of King Mandev has the word for Brahmin. Rajopadhyay Brahmins are the priest in three ancient Naryan temples till

³¹ Gobardhan Sharma " Rajopadhyay", *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu:Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., p.386

³² Interview with Baldev Juju, on B.S. 2066-3-19

date i.e, Icchangu, Bisenkhu and Changu. Rajopadhyay priest also have vital roles in chariot festival of Machhindra Nath which is believed as ancient festival.

Karmacharya are also spotted in the same rank. They were mainly involved in rituals performed in tantric way, besides which they also worked as main priest in *Taleju* temple of all three capitals during medieval period and the tradition is continued till date.³³ During *digu* puja they replace Rajopadhyay brahmin as the priest for most of the Shrestha families. They also had some role in purification rituals following the death pollution.

Next to Newar Brahmin or Rajopadhyay comes Bajracharya. Bajracharya serves as the priest for the Buddha- margi Newars. ‘Bajracharya’ word is made up of two words: Bajra and Acharya. Any person who after Prabajya successfully completes the acharya level of Bajrayana is given the title ‘Bajracharya’.³⁴ The term ‘*ācāhuyegu*’ is used for the process where a young boy after his Prabajya and before marriage goes through the process of receiving five *abhishek* and tantric education after which he is entitled to write such surname as Bajracharya. But later on, the system of writing father’s surname became the tradition so to write Bajracharya as surname was frequent despite the fact that the person went through the process of *Ācāhuyegu* or not.

Bajracharya means the Acharya of Bajrayana who has the right to carry the bell with vajra for religious purposes. Any person who failed to complete this process of *ācāhuyegu* wrote the caste as Buddhacharya and lost the rights to perform any religious rituals. As time passed on and with the division of castes according to profession, Bajracharya was simply taken as a surname for the priestly caste. It was then transferred from father to son regardless of the completion of the ritual. But even in present, though Bajracharya is written as caste, the membership in *ācā-guthi* is

³³ Tulsi Narayan Shrestha, *Nepal Ka Newarharu: Pahichhan ra Pristabhumi*, (Newars of Nepal: Identity and Background), Kathmandu: Institute for Research and Development, 2066 B.S., p.62

³⁴ Shrestha, f.n.1, p. 69

strictly restricted to those who complete the ritual act of *ācāluṃyegu*.³⁵ Unlike Rajopadhyay who take help from Karmacharya to perform any *homa* (sacred fire) or tantric puja, Bajracharya performs every ritual act from birth to death alone.

Next to Bajracharya comes the group Bare or Shakya and Uday from Buddhamargi while Shresthas from Shivamargi. Bare or Shakya are the goldsmith. They regard themselves in similar rank as Bajracharyas but are not eligible to perform any priestly work. Inter marriage between these two caste is legal and widely accepted.³⁶ Even it is said that Shakyas are the offspring of Bajracharya with other lower caste so they are degraded a step and are not allowed to carry vajra and bell to perform any ritual but have exclusive rights along with Bajracharya to attend Buddhist shrines. These people feel themselves as descendants of Gautam Buddha as both shares the same clan name i.e, Shakya.³⁷ Sometimes they are called as Grantha Guru also as they complied the Buddhist scriptures. In present time most of the Shakya families are involved in gold ornament business.

Uday or Udas also ranked among high class Buddhist Newars are the merchant group. This group is composed of nine different castes according to the special profession they have expertise on. The nine castes of this group are : Sthapit- involved in carpentry, Baniya: related to Ayurvedic medicines, Tamrakar: related to copper works, Kansakar: involved in bronze business, Silakar: these people used to make statues from stone, Shikhrakar: experts in making rooftops of traditional style Newari houses, Sindurakar: makers of special type of cloth used specially in chariot festivals or religious events, Tuladhar: merchants who used to trade with Tibet and Selalik: experts in making different kinds of sweets specially during Samyak festival.³⁸ Also the different castes of this group are given different responsibilities for the celebration

³⁵ Interview with Rajjendra Man Bajracharya, on B.S. 2067-6-11

³⁶ Interview with Daman Shakya, on B.S. 2067-6-12

³⁷ Shrestha, f.n.1, p.28

³⁸ Uttam Raj Silakar, "Uday Samaj : Chhagu Mhasika" (Uday Society: An Introduction), *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu, 1127 N.S., pp. 7-12

of Samyak. Though ranked in similar position, these people do not dine together with Shakyas. The matrimonial relation among these nine castes is practised and accepted.

Shrestha is a collective surname for more than 64 different castes. Though they have some role in religious functions, Joshi also come under this broad category of Shrestha. Shresthas are Shiva-margi Newars and they believe in Hindu divinities. But some of them because of the influence of locality consider themselves as Buddhist. For eg- the Pradhans of Bhagwan Bahal can be taken as Buddhist because of the location of a Buddhist deity *Singa Sartha Bāhu* in that area. Shrestha also have two categories *Chhathari* and *Panchthari*. General belief is that the *Chhathari* Shresthas are the pure one while *Panchthari* are the hybrid one.³⁹ Matrimonial relations among these two groups are rarely practised. People belonging to this caste used to hold high government post during medieval period. Some of the popular castes in this category are Pradhan, Vaidya, Amatya, Rajbhandari, Malla etc. People belonging to such castes either can write their surname or can use Shrestha in general. An Amatya got his surname from his job at the palace as the ministers during the reign of Malla Kings. So are the Pradhans. They also held high government rankings in the palace during those days. The history mentions about the six Pradhans of Patan who even had the power to dethrone the king. Vaidya usually were associated with the medicines and one section of this group served as raj vaidya for the Royal family. Besides this, there are three other subdivision in this category among which *Ghāte Vaidya* is the one, whose main work is to look after the patient in his very last moments. Even these days, there are *Ghāte Vaidyas* who, some people believe, can accurately predict the last moment of the dying patient. Rajbhandari used to look after the royal stores of the palace. That being the reason in Pashupati Nath temple, it is the Newar Bhandaris who look after the stores. Mallas in this group are the descendents of the late Malla rulers.

³⁹ Interview with Manik lal Shrestha, on B.S- 2066-12-30

After the high class comes the upper lower class in which comes agricultural based worker *Jyapū*. No one above this caste accepts cooked food from this caste and they also don't accept cooked food from people lower than them. *Jyapū*, as most of them think, should be Jya + phoo which in Newari means one who can do lot of work.⁴⁰ Internally, this group also has many sub castes which are divided according to the work they do. Maharjans are the one who work in the field, while Prajapati make domestic or religious items from clay and Dangol are related with measurement work. Awals are related with making walls of house while one of the castes within Jyapū is given responsibility for the production of special kind of flower '*Mū*' used during the chariot festival of god Karunamaya. Long before, matrimonial relations even among these sub-castes were not accepted. These people are Buddha- margi Newars and have Bajracharya as their priest. But, these people observe *Gai Jatra* unlike other Buddha- margi Newars and this can be taken as an exceptional case.

There are seven castes in the lower but pure category. These seven castes have their specific and traditional profession. Though there has been a lot of change in the occupation because of the development in the field of education we can find lot of families who still are bound to their traditional profession. Ranjitkar or *Chipās* are mainly associated with dying cloth. They worship Manjushree, a Buddhist deity as their ancestor. The famous Lakhe dance which is shown during Indra jatra (Aug-Sep) is organized by Ranjitkars of Kathmandu Valley. The population of this caste is also concentrated in Kathmandu. Though it may sound similar, Ranjitkar and Karranjit (*Bha*) are two totally different castes. Ranjitkars belong to Buddhamargi families while Karranjit are Saivites. These people employ Bajracharya as their priest for any religious purposes.

Nakarmi (*Kau*) as the name suggests are related with iron work. Na in Newari means iron and karmi- one who works on that. Their main job is to make objects of iron. Previously they used to make knives, *chulesi*, and other utensils, but with the change

⁴⁰ Interview with Satya Narayan Dangol, on B.S- 2067-2-18

in tradition where many kitchen-wares are made of plastics and other than iron, these people are now engaged with making iron gates, grills or working with automobile workshops. They also regard themselves as strong followers of Buddhism and have Bajracharya as their priest.

Manandhar or *Sāyami* or *Sāłmi* is one of the seven castes of this group whose main profession is the production of oil in *sāl*. These people are mainly concentrated in Kathmandu and are found in organized way in different localities. The eleven main localities with majority of population are; Dakshasaal, Falchasaal, Laikusaal, Nhusaal, Watu, Pako Puku dya, Talachi, Thahity, Chasan, Dhalasikwo and Maru Dwakha.⁴¹ All major localities have one *Sāl* where they produce oil and in old days they used to do it in cooperative basis. But nowadays most of the people left this traditional occupation so most of the *sāls* are not in use. Besides Kathmandu, Manandhars live in Bhaktapur, Thimi, Banepa, Panauti and other around twenty districts of Nepal. Religiously these people are Buddhists and have Bajracharya as their priest.

Chitrakar (*Pun*) are the painters. They specially paint for religious purposes. They make mask of god and goddesses. They used to make replica of eyes, tantric mandalas or any tantric objects which are must during the secret *āgam* puja. There are very few families left who are still running this tradition but there still are some families who are satisfied with what they earn and even the third generation was involved in painting. The eyes representing Vairochan of Swamyambhu Mahachaitya are always painted by certain group of Chitrakars. Once, the government switched on to some other painter (probably Tibetan), as the latter charged less, but there arose some such instances that forced them to ask again to the Chitrakars for the same.⁴² There is another common belief that making images of lion by Chitrakar when one suffer from a kind of allergy (commonly known as Nep. *Janai Khatirā* and New. *Jwana Kai*) is

⁴¹ Sayami, f.n. 11, p. 249

⁴² Interview with Indra Bahadur Chitrakar, on B.S. 2067-6-22

widely practiced even nowadays.⁴³ The *citlā* used during the lineage god worship is also made by the Chitrakars. These people also follow Buddhism.

Malakar or Mali (Gathu) are the gardeners. Their main job is to cultivate different kinds of flowers and during old days exchange it with other items necessary for daily use. They are also involved in Pachali Bhairab jatra. It is one of the Mali who wears the mask of the Bhairava⁴⁴ and exchange the sword with the King who used to preside in the Jatra as head of the nation once in every 12 years. It is believed that the god transforms his power to the king through his sword to rule the country effectively. Since the political scenario of the country has changed drastically and now we have president as head of the state, even within the Mali society, there are two divisions about this ritual; senior people want to continue it with the previous king while the younger generation wants to accept the resent reality and continue with the president.

Tandukar(Khusa) are supposed to be the first one who introduced production of best quality rice. '*Khusa*', a Newari word, is made up of *Khu+sa*, meaning one who really knows a lot about something. *Tandul* is a Sanskrit term meaning rice, so both of these terms are related with the cultivation of rice.⁴⁵ Some of the researchers have opined that these people are the descendants of *Koliya*. One of the sections of this caste serves as *Nay Gubhaju*, meaning the priest for the Khadgi Caste.

Dali (Duiya) also falls on the same category. These people have several other surnames as Putuwar, Rajputuwar or Raj Bahak. It is said that formerly this caste was under unclean category. Following the rescue of the Gorkha King in the palanquin these people were graded up to a clean caste by the King after the unification of the country. It is said that the caste Raj Bahak (the carrier of the Royal) is the result of

⁴³ It is believed that if someone suffers from such allergy, the image of lions painted by the chitrakars have much more effect than others medicines.

⁴⁴ He is Prithi Narayan Mali whom I interviewed during my research.

⁴⁵ Shrestha, f.n.1, p.52

that incident.⁴⁶ Major populations of these castes are found in the Halchowk area of Kathmandu. As it used to be very remote place, people up to recent past used to have limited access to the urban environment. This also resulted in less awareness in education and other fields. Most of them are involved in selling jungle products, flowers and red soil. Among the seven castes of this group, this is the only caste who calls themselves as non-Buddhists. They have Rajopadhyay Brahmins as their priest and sometimes Kusle or Newar Jugi also has a role in death purification rituals. People of this caste have much important role in Sawo Baku and Bhairava dance which is shown during Indra jatra festival.

Napit (Nau) is a barber. Usually, people count this caste along with above mentioned seven castes. But the civil code of 1854 does not mention this caste along with these seven professional castes. Long before, these people used to visit the upper caste Newar families (up to Uday and Shrestha) in certain occasions to cut the toe nails which in case of lower but clean caste is done by Khadgi. At present, there are very few Napit families who still are continuing their traditional profession. They call themselves as Buddhamargi but most of their religious functions as priest are performed by Rajopadhyay Brahmin.

Below these castes are the formerly unclean and untouchable castes. These people do not have clear identity as to which religion they follow. One of the clan of Tandukar serves as a priest of lower caste Khadgi, but the term used for them is similar to that that Buddhamargi Newars use for Bajracharya, i.e, Gubhaju. Only the prefix 'Nay' is added to the previous one resembling their own caste.

⁴⁶ Nepali, f.n.29, pp.173-74

4.5 Guthi System

Guthi is a Newari word believed to be derived from Sanskrit word *Gosthi* meaning group or gathering of people for some cause.⁴⁷ The centuries old traditions of this country which still are in practice and which its people show proudly as their culture to the world are left because of this organization called *guthi*. If we study the history of *guthi* and the facts related to it, we can say it for sure that if these *guthis* were not envisioned by our ancestors, the temples, gumbas, different festivals which are the base of our Nepali culture would have ruined long before.⁴⁸ Though not given proper attention as it should have received many *guthis* are still in practice but unfortunately more than this number have extinct.

The topic of *guthi* has always remained as an interesting issue not only for national researchers but to the foreign writers also as G. Toffin, a French scholar has mentioned in his book that this unique feature of *guthi* was the subject that attracted him to start his research in Nepal.⁴⁹ Even Nepali writers also have penned down lots of works in this theme of *Guthi*. According to Dilli Raman Regmi, a renowned Nepali historian “*Guthi* is a group of persons united for a common objective”⁵⁰ while Chhitadhar Hridaya, a Newar Scholar has said “*Guthi* is an organized institution created to enhance the standard living of people”.⁵¹ In a simple way function of any *guthi* can be termed as a team work in which the leadership is handed over to the most senior person in that group and the trend continues.

Guthis are formed for the preservation and maintenance of temple, or continuation of any festival, or helping the needy persons as social work also. Starting from Lichhavi period we have inscriptions mentioning the word *guthi* and this trend continues during

⁴⁷ Phanindra Ratna Bajracharya, *Newa Baudhha Sanskriti Guthi* (*Guthi* in Newar Buddhist Culture), Kathmandu: Ratna Pithana, Jwabahal, 1126 N.S., p.7

⁴⁸ Dr. Govinda Tandon, *Nepal Guthi Mahatwa ra Upadeyata* (Importance of *Guthi* in Nepal and its Utility), Nepal *Guthi* Samrakshan Pucha: Kathmandu, 2065 B.S., p.10

⁴⁹ Gerrard Toffin, *Newar Society- City, Village and Periphery*, Lalaitpur: Himal Books, 2007, p.2

⁵⁰ D.R.Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2007, p.291

⁵¹ Chhitadhar Hridaya, *Guthi, Nepal Ritupau*, Kantipur: Nyata Tuchhe, 1072 N.S., Year 2, No.3, p.46

Malla and Shah period also. Though the majority of the *guthis* formed are based on religious aspect but there are few others also which have been kept for social work in name of some of the deceased persons in the family.⁵² Even if directly not related with religious purpose, motive behind forming any *guthi* in most cases is to gain merit by serving others. Inscriptions related with such *guthis* also mention the same. Lines such as one who offers charity will find place in heaven after death, while the one who destroys it or misuse it have to suffer in the hell are always written in the bottom of the inscriptions.⁵³ As people were very religious minded during those times and to go against such things were considered as great sin, so the *guthis* specially related with religious importance got smooth continuation. It seems like the trend to keep *guthi* is popular among Newars only. There is even one local saying that a Newar is born in a *guthi*, lives his life in *guthi* and dies in *guthi*. Fact also shows the involvement of newar people in establishing *guthi* in individual level for any reason is incomparable to any other caste in Nepal. As Gerrad Toffin writes –

Guthi system of the Newars reflects a culture that places religion at the heart of its preoccupations and activities. There are no ethnic groups in Nepal that devout more time and money to rituals, festivals and offering to the gods than the Newars.⁵⁴

Looking upon the nature of the *guthi* in Nepal it can be divided into two types regarding the one who establishes it. *Rāj guthi* - *guthis* established by King, Queen or any other royal family member while the second one established by the common people. *Chut guthi* can be considered as a branch of *Rāj guthi* as this *guthi* is formed in name of some person to look after *Rāj Guthi*. The economic sources for such *guthis* are the leftover of the *Raj Guthis*. However the *Guthi Sansthan Act* of 2033 B.S.

⁵² Damodar Paudel, *Samaj ra Rastrako Utthanma Guthiko Bhumika* (Role of *Guthi* in the development of Society and Nation), Kathmandu: Nepal Rajkiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2044 B.S., p.7

⁵³ Tandon, f.n..48, p.11

⁵⁴ Gerrad Toffin, From Kin to Caste: The Role of *Guthis* in Newar Society and Culture, Lecture by G Toffin at Mahesh Chandra Regmi lecture series organized by Social Science Baha, September 2005.

dissolved all such kinds of *Chut guthis* and have emerged the preexisting one in *Rāj guthi*. The *guthis* established by common people can further be divided into four or five sub headings. *Guthis* related to religious work, philanthropic work, caste based *guthis*, *guthis* for enjoyment etc. The membership in such *guthis* is either optional or compulsory, or in some cases inherited or voluntary also. People used to build temples and viharas and for the maintenance of such they establish *guthis*. Maintenance includes painting, regular cleaning specially after monsoon season etc. In addition to that *guthis* were also established to perform special pujas and more interesting is the one which looks after to feed the monkeys and pigeons found around the temple areas.⁵⁵

Philanthropic *guthi* includes making water conduits and wells, small permanent inns (Newari. *Falecha*) used to take rest by travelers, making bridges etc. Caste based *guthis* are found specially among Bajracharyas, Manandhars and Jyapūs. But nowadays even other newar castes have started to make such groups based on their caste which are government registered. The previous one is neither government registered body nor has formal code of conduct but all the members strictly follows the rules and regulations set by the seniors. In any function of such *guthi* no one from other caste is involved except specially invited which is also a recent development. Up to recent past the arrangements for wedding reception party at any member's family were conducted by the members of this *guthi*. But at present such trend is limited to few families only who wish to organize such. But in case of Manandhars up to now it is their local *guthi* which makes arrangements for the special reception given on the completion of mourning year by the bereaved family of the dead to their relatives and friends. Such reception is called "*Jābhu*" which is conducted generally on the final day of one year mourning period in case of any death in the family.⁵⁶ All

⁵⁵ Bajracharya, f.n.47, p.37

⁵⁶ Generally it used to be on the final day of one year mourning period but citing the availability of place and manpower people have started to hold such reception during any time of one year mourning period and specially during winter.

the work from preparation, cooking to serving is done by the *guthi* members and also without taking any charge.

The role of *guthi* is not limited only in celebrating festivals, taking care of the temples etc but also during the tough times like during death of any family members. *Sanā guthi* and *Si guthi* are two special and most important *guthis* which can be placed under caste based *guthi* though the work these *guthis* do can equally be place under philanthropic heading also. These two *guthis* acts during the funeral process. *Sanā guthi* looks after the work related with funeral procession and necessary arrangements for cremation while *Si guthi* is the one related with cremation of the body. In cases where there is no differentiation between *Si* and *Sanā guthi* all the work from arranging the necessary materials to cremation of the dead body is done by *Si guthi*. The members of such *guthi* take care of calling all other members of the *guthi* at the funeral site, managing necessary materials for death rituals and completing all the death rituals without burdening the intimate family members. Membership in these *guthis* is based on caste that is person belonging to another caste even though a Newar cannot join other *Sanā* or *Si guthi*.

Sanā wanegu is a newari term which means to be part of the funeral procession, remembering the good works done by the deceased and wishing him eternal peace. While being a member in the procession person should not wear caps, sandals and talk to each other. Though the members of the *Sanā guthi* must be of same caste, friends and well wishers may also attend the funeral procession. According to Toffin this word *Sanā* is most probably from Sanskrit word *snana*- ritual bath, as in old days the custom to take bath by all the people involved in funeral procession was practiced.⁵⁷

Every year one member of *Sanā Guthi* gets his turn; it is his duty throughout that year to inform all other members in case of any death in his fraternity. He is the one who

⁵⁷ Toffin, f.n.54, p.4

keeps the record of the members present or absent at the cremation site. In such cases the absent members are bound to pay certain amount as fine which in Newari is called as *Ban*. There are many rituals that are completed in the cremation site and these members jointly work on that. Work is divided among the members and if certain responsibility comes for a one who is absent he has to pay more fine than actual fine taken from an absent member. Almost all the members join the procession not only because they have to pay fine but they take it as their duty. Regarding such fine, one incident is still heard about one rich businessman of Manandhar caste who never attended such funeral. He used to tell the person who informed him to add the fine in his name. Everyone noticed his absence. When his mother died no one came but just send a message to add fine in their name. At last when it seemed impossible to carry out the last rituals with very few members present the businessman made apologies to whatever he did in the past and the last rites were completed.⁵⁸

After all arrangements are made finally the pyre is lit and now it's the turn for the core members of *Si guthi* who stays there up to the end and looks after it. Out of all the members of *Si guthi* a core committee is formed with few members who are called as *Guthiyārs*, membership in this core committee is either hereditary or voluntary. As the work carried out by these members of core group requires lots of courage it is up to the members to join this or stay out of it. These members are treated very specially at other occasions also praising the difficult work carried by them during the funeral of any member of their *guthi*. In case of castes in which there is no differentiation between *Si* and *Sanā guthi*, *guthi* related with such responsibilities is called *Si guthi* only. In such case a group is formed from the members of the *guthi* which works as the *Guthiyārs* of *Si guthi* in other case.

Sometimes different *guthis* work together to celebrate one festival. During Indraajatra we can find involvement of more than five/six newar caste working together to

⁵⁸ My grandmother used to tell this when I was quite young, stressing the importance of *guthi* and our duty towards it.

celebrate this festival. At first, Manandhars bring the Indradhwja that is erected at Basantapur Durbar Square which marks the formal beginning of the festival.⁵⁹ Kumari, Ganesha, Bhairab who are worshipped as living gods and are the center of attraction during this festival are chosen from Shakya caste while ropes of the chariot in which they are taken is made by Manandhars.⁶⁰ Manandhars are also involved in *Bau Mata*, it is a kind of procession in which lights are placed in special rack made up of bamboo and people carry that bamboo rack along which traditional light placed in it. Ranjitkars are involved in famous *Lākhe* dance which is another chief feature of Indra Jatra. The big white wooden elephant (*Pulukishi*) supported by two mens from inside which is seen during Indrajatra is supposed to be *Erāwat* (God Indra's elephant of heaven). Jyapūs of Kilagal have *guthi* to run this jatra of *Pulukishi*. A person belonging to jyapū caste becomes *Dāgin* who is supposed to be Indra's mother. It is believed that she came to earth in search of her son, Indra and promised the people to take them along with her to the heaven where they could meet their deceased family members.

Another example of such festival in which more than one caste is involved is the Indrayani Jatra held during Nov- Dec at Thahity and Indrayani temple premises.⁶¹ The sacred fire ritual is performed by the descendants of the Malla rulers at the premises of the temple while the Manandhars of Thahity and Jyapūs of Tahanani plays vital role in conducting the chariot procession of the goddesses Indrayani along with other five gods and goddesses. These two are just a few to mention out of many which were established to provide smooth continuation to such rituals and up to now despite facing lots of problems are performing their duties up to the mark.

Digu dyo guthi is one such *guthi* which is related with the celebration of the lineage god worship. The members are related from the patrilineal side. Along with the

⁵⁹ Toffin, f.n.54, p.16

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.16

⁶¹ Mary M. Anderson, *The Festivals of Nepal*, New Delhi: Rupa and Co., 1977, p. 195

celebration of *digu* puja this *guthi* is equally responsible for taking major decisions for the members of the *guthi*. Though the membership is hereditary in case of violation of law by the members the seniors of this *guthi* can expel the person from the lineage or this *guthi* which in turn results in expulsion from his native group. Be it during auspicious occasions like marriage, child birth, coming of age ceremony or in adverse situation like death of any member, the members of this *guthi* are the one which has a major role to play in both cases. But with the changing time it is not the same as it used to be. Number of families who celebrate their *digu pūjā* individually is growing in multiple numbers. Even Toffin mentioned it as

Even the *guthis* in charge of the lineage deity appears to be on the wane among many castes. In nearly all cases, *guthi* membership is no longer binding as it once was. In truth, a global dissonance has developed between these institutions and modern society.⁶²

Facts show that the present generation devote less time in such religious act. It does not apply that young generation does not have any feeling or respect towards their religion and rituals but the modern day life style have little lessened the importance of religion than it used to be. The so called modernization have altered the mentalities of the youth and in particular their perception about the religion and rituals. In such a situation it has become difficult to imagine the long run of the *guthis* established by our seniors unless the present day seniors allows some changes in the rituals in accordance with time.

4.6 The Patrilineage

From ancient time Nepali families are based on patriarchal system. Not being exception, Newari families also have a strong bond among the patrilineal relations. This relation not only confines itself in day to day normal life but obliges throughout birth to death life cycle rituals. The general term used to denote this relation is '*phukī*'

⁶² Toffin, f.n.54, p.28

and when we use the term *phukī*, it means origination from the common source. Even within the broad term '*phukī*', '*ba phukī*' is used for families which are separated from '*digu pūjā guthi*' (*guthi* related with the annual worship of lineage god). The term '*sya phukī*' is used for families which are very close and need to perform ritual purification in case of birth, death, **Barha** or other occasions. The membership in the *phukī* is hereditary and hence cannot be changed otherwise. Daughters lose their membership after they join their spouse's *guthi* while male members can lose their membership if they marry women from lower castes or formerly water unacceptable castes. Besides marriage, there are several other reasons that could exclude not only the male member but his whole family from the *phukī* group. Each household is represented by the eldest male member of the family in any ritual. If the father dies it is the responsibility of the eldest son to represent his family in place of his father. But in case all the brothers are living separately, then the *phukī* members may ask them to join the *guthi* as separate families. If they fail to do it, it may result in expulsion of the whole family from that *phukī* group.

Another reason for expulsion which was seen in many cases was the misuse of the assets of the *guthi*. Generally the head of the lineage who is called as *Thākuli* is regarded as the guardian of the whole *phukī* group and is given the responsibility to look after the assests (mainly land) which have been kept for the smooth continuation of the *guthi*. It is usually the second or third generation members who have been found to misuse the property as it had their father/grandfather's name as the owner. These kinds of activities also lead to the expulsion of the family from the *phukī*.

Besides these kinds of expulsions, one may also leave considering the rituals as a burden, but as the membership is hereditary, he cannot join any other *digu pūjā guthi*. In some cases, two or three families can separate from the large group and celebrate their own *dewali pūjā* on some other day than the previous group. But the shrine or place remains the same as they are not allowed to adopt any new *guthi*.

These *phukī* groups are exogamous, which means they cannot intermarry with the members of the same *phukī* group. In some cases, not only the same *phukī* group who celebrates the *dewali pūjā* on same day but groups who share the same shrine for the worship of their lineage god do not marry with each other as they believe they belong to the same ancestor. But among Sakyas and Bajracharyas where a large group (hundreds of families) share the same vihara as shrine for the lineage god worship, such rules are not adopted. They only follow the rule of seven generation on the paternal side as the restriction for marriage.

This *phukī* group has a strong control over its members. In case of marriage with some inter-caste it is the *phukī* members who react first. They first decide whether to take *gwe* (betel nuts) from her or not. Taking *gwe* from daughter in law is accepting her in her spouse's family/*guthi*. If they do not allow the daughter in law in their *digu* puja *guthi*, then she is not accepted in any other *guthis*. Besides the role of *phukī* during annual lineage god worship, these people have many other occasions where they meet and interact. Happy occasions like birth, final day of **Barha**, marriage etc are some occasions in which all the members participate and follow certain responsibilities. Especially the role of *Thākuli Naki* is much important during Barha and marriage. *Thākuli Naki* is the wife of the head of the family and irrespective of her age, she is the head among the ladies according to her husband's position as a *Thākuli*. On the final day of Barha, all the puja rituals are conducted by the *Thākuli Naki* and in marriage also, she is the one who has a prime role in the *Lasa Kusa* (welcome ritual) of the bride (daughter-in-law), and prime accompany of the bride (in case of daughter) to her husband's house.

Male members of the *phukī* have prime role during death pollution and in following purification rituals. After death of any member, these *phukī* members have the obligation to follow the purification rituals for a whole year. After death of any member, up to 13 days (in some castes 7 days), all *phukī* members observe death pollution period in which they are restricted to take bath and certain food items such

as meat, egg, tomato, onion etc. On the 10th day, all the *phukī* members go to a nearby river and take bath which marks the end of the death pollution. But the pollution period is formally ended only on the 12th day when they observe a ritual called *Gha Su*. On the 13th day, Sradda ceremony is observed in the name of the deceased person for the first time. After this, they meet on 45th day, 6 month, and one year and two year rituals.

The married daughters do not observe any death pollution in her parental house because they are considered to be the members of their husband's house. But they send certain food items to the deceased family in the name of *Bya*. In case some death occurs in her spouse's *phukī* group, both male and female *phukī* members from her natal home must go and give their condolences.

CHAPTER V

Digu Pūjā: Worship of the Lineage god

Dewāli pūjā is a common Nepali term, signifying the celebration related to the lineage-god worship. Likewise, *kula-pūjā* or *kula devatā pūjā* is also widely used by the non-newars for the celebration of the same, while among Newars it is called as *digu-pūjā*.¹ The word *Kula* refers to one's lineage² so *kula-pūjā* is the *pūjā*/celebration that is related to one's own lineage and its members. *Digu* in Newari means the clan, race or lineage,³ so it also refers to the celebration that is related to the same clan, or lineage members, lineage god being at the centre of the worship. The word '*digu*' also has another meaning, *Digu* means someone who looks after others for their well being.⁴

Some cultural historians have other opinion as *digu pūjā* is a modified term from the word *degurī*. There are few medieval period inscriptions which mention the word *degurī*. According to Kashinath Tamot, *degurī* simply means *deike wanegu* which means going to the temple.⁵ So, in his view, *digu pūjā* or *degurī* means going to the temple for worship. But the participation of the same clan members in *kula pūjā* or *digu pūjā* seems to support the previous view.

In general this *digu pūjā* is called as *de pūjā* by majority of Newars till date. *De* in Newari also denotes country. So, *de pūjā* means *pūjā* that is performed by all the country men.

¹ Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars*, Kathmandu: Himalayan Book Sellers, Reprint 1988, p.333

² Basu Dev Tripathi et al, *Nepali Brihat Sabdakosh* (Comprehensive Nepali Dictionary), Kathmandu:Nepal Rajkiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2040 B.S, p.253-254

³ Ishworananda Shrestha and Tirtha Raj Tuladhar, *Newar, Nepali, Angregi Sabdakosh* (Newar, Nepali, English Dictionary), Kathmandu:Nepal Rajkiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2054 B.S, p.184

⁴ Ranjana D. Bajracharya, Newar Baudha Samajma Digu Dyo ra Digu pūjā (Lineage god and its pūjā among Newar Buddhist). Paper presented at Fifth International Conference on Buddhist heritage of Nepal, April 22-25, 2011. P.2

⁵ Interview with Kashi Nath Tamot, on 2066-12-3

Some other writers term this *pūjā* as *masān pūjā* or *pūjā* observed at funeral sites.⁶ Although *digu* word itself is similar to the word *dipa* (funeral site in Newari), only few examples of *digu pūjā* sites near the funeral sites do not fully assure to the theory of terming it as *mashan pūjā*. So the most appropriate meaning of *digu* is clan, race or lineage.

5.1 *Digu khala*

The families who share the same shrine for the worship of the lineage god are called *digu khala*. These *digu khala* are known or called as *phukī* in general term. Considered as the offsprings from a common source (ancestor), the members of a *phukī* group are obliged to follow the birth, death and *barha* purification rituals.⁷

Even among non-Newars, the families who share the same place as lineage deity shrine call them as *tehra dine dāju bhāi* which symbolically represents the death purification rituals that lasts for thirteen days.

There is one exception to this *digu khala*. The case is from Bhaktapur where *digu khala* are not the families from the same lineage but the families of one locality. These people perform their *digu pūjā* together. The celebration is limited only to *pūjā* and not the common feast. Another strange feature of this group is the daughters in law are not entitled to perform any *pūjā* while married off daughters enjoy their participation throughout their life. The main motto behind this is, since it is the *kula pūjā*, daughter-in-law born in different *kula* (clan) cannot participate.⁸

5.2 Time and Duration

The tradition of observing *digupūjā* is different from one clan to another. It is observed once, twice or in few cases thrice in the Newar society. Till date, most of the

⁶ Thakur Lal Manandhar, Bhaju Nibanda, Kantipur Nepal Bhasa Patrika, N.S. 1111, p.

⁷ Nepali, f.n.1, p.132

⁸ Interview with Manik Lal Shrestha, on 2066-12-30

Newar Buddhists have continued with this trend. But gradually, most of the families have started to celebrate it in small scale. Here, small in a sense that instead of celebrating it for four or five days they wrap up all the events in two or three days. The Newars who follow the Hindu tradition have long been celebrating their *dewālipūjā* only once a year and that too for a single day.⁹

In this connection, Joshi Newars celebrate their '*digu pūjā*' in a very different way. Unlike many other Saiva margi Newar families who observe it once a year, they observe it every time a male family member gets married. The *dewālipūjā* takes place the very next day of the marriage, even before completing the follow-up rituals related to marriage ceremony.¹⁰

Practice of observing *kula-pūjā* for a single day is also found among non-Newars. In their case it is not only for a single day but once in three, five, seven or twelve years.¹¹ Shahs who have settled in Kathmandu after the unification of the country celebrate their *kula-pūjā* once a year.¹² But the Rana family and others who celebrate their *kulāyani pūjā* at *Pancāyan*, Thapathali, do it in alternative year.¹³ The reason behind celebrating the *kula-pūjā* once in 3, 5, 7 or 12 years which is commonly found among Brahmins and Chhetris is that in their opinion it gives more importance to the *pūjā* ceremony. Since it is celebrated after a long gap, every member would try their best to be a part of it. At present, most of the Brahmin and Chhetri families who had their *Kula-devatā* in their ancestral home in village far from Kathmandu have started celebrating it here. But the difficulty that they find is that not all the families related to a single lineage are settled here. What they now do is all families sharing the same surname make a group, keeping in mind that as they share the same surname they must belong to the same lineage, and together celebrate their *kula pūjā* in some open

⁹ Interview with Saphalya Amatya, on 2067-11-27

¹⁰ Interview with Bijay dhoj Joshi, on 2067-3-28

¹¹ Interview with Madhav Raj Bhattarai, on 2067-9-8

¹² Interview with Girvan Shah, on 2067-6-23

¹³ Interview with Maya rana, on 2067-6-20

place in Kathmandu. Such examples show that nowadays people who have settled here and find it difficult to go back to their village just for the *kula-pūjā*, do make an effort to come together albeit in between a long gap of several years to celebrate the *kula-pūjā*.¹⁴

The tradition of observing the *dewālipūjā* or *digu pūjā* for couple of days and twice or thrice in a same year is found among Newar-Buddhist families. Even though they also had made certain changes in the name of simplifying, they are the ones who still are giving continuity to this centuries-old tradition. Most of the groups who are reviving it after the gap of a decade or more belong to Newars' Buddhist family.¹⁵

There is a specific time period in which almost all the Newars of Kathmandu observe their *digu pūjā*.¹⁶ Co-incidentally the non-Newars who have long been settled here in the valley also have their *kula-pūjā* in between the same time frame. The festive season of worshipping the lineage god starts from the first day of bright lunar fortnight in the month of Baishakh (April-May) to the sixth day of bright lunar fortnight in the month of Jestha (May-June). The last day is commonly known as *Sithī nakha*. All the families who either have separated from the mainstream or have forgotten the specific date for *digu pūjā* observe it during this day of *Sithī nakha*.

5.3 Reason for Specific time

Cultural historians share different views about this specific period for the celebration of *digu-pūjā*. According to Baladev juju, the weather during this period is really very treacherous. Hot and humid conditions with wind, storm and rainfall makes people vulnerable to certain diseases like diarrhea, cholera and other types of contagious diseases. Nowadays, people get vaccinations but long before, people did not have

¹⁴ Certain Brahmin and Chhetri groups residing in Kathmandu for a long time now celebrate their *kul pūjā* here at Kathmandu.

¹⁵ Malakar and Chitrakar families from Kirtipur and certain Manandhar families of Kathmandu have restarted to celebrate the lineage god worship after a gap of more than a decade. All these three caste belongs to Newar Buddhist family.

¹⁶ Nepali, f.n.1, p.333

such privilege. So the trend to worship the lineage god might have started seeking the blessing of the god to be protected from such diseases.¹⁷

Kashi Nath Tamot has a different view in this regard. The last day of this worship season i.e., *Sithī Nakha* marks the starting of the harvesting season. *Sithī Nakha* is taken as a day to clean all the wells for the upcoming rainy season. As farming was the main profession of the people, this season can be taken as leisure time after chilly winter. People might have utilized this time for a get-together with all the members of a single lineage.¹⁸

The above mentioned time period for these groups is when they celebrate their *Mu digu pūjā*. *Mu* in newari means main. Couple of years back people, mostly Manandhars and Maharjans of Kathmandu, used to celebrate this *Mu digu pūjā* for four or five days. But nowadays most of the groups have started to complete this event in three days.¹⁹

The second time is after fifteen days of the *Mu digu pūjā* where *tithi* is same as of *Mu digu pūjā*. This one is called *Nya digu pūjā*. *Nya* in Newari can be taken as abbreviated form of *nyayekegu* meaning to celebrate. It shows that this celebration may be a later addition. This one is optional and is celebrated at the premises of the temple of lineage god and not in the open field where other two *digu pūjās* are held. The food restriction is not followed so it is like a family picnic.²⁰

The third or the last one falls after four months of *Mu digu pūjā*. Here again, the celebrations are made on the same *tithi*. It is called *Nachā digu pūjā*. Though not observed in a lavish style as *Mu digu pūjā*, it is celebrated for two days.

¹⁷ Interview with Baladev juju, on 2066-11-28

¹⁸ Interview with Kasha Nath Tamot, on 2066-12-3

¹⁹ Personal observation

²⁰ Especially the Manandhars of Kathmandu have the tradition of celebrating their *Nya digu pūjā* at the premises of the temple of lineage god.

5.4 Worship among Different Caste Groups

5.4.1 Buddha Margi Newars

5.4.1.1 Bajracharya

Newar as a group can be divided into two sub-groups regarding the religion they follow.²¹ The priestly castes which occupy the highest rank among the Newars are the Bajracharyas and Rajopadhyays. Besides these, two castes Karmacharya and Joshi who also have certain roles in religious functions in Hindu Newar family are also counted as priest class. Bajracharya performs the rituals as a priest in Newar Buddhist families.

The Bajracharyas also have their *digu- pūjā* twice a year.²² The optional *Nya-digu pūjā* is not celebrated. However, a group of Bajracharyas of *Wotu-bhujim baha* celebrate *Nya digu pūjā* once every twelfth year. For this, they go to the main shrine of their *Kula-devatā* at the premises of Guheswari. The difference here is that *Nya digu-pūjā* is celebrated at the time of *Mu digu pūjā*.²³ So, this *Nya digu pūjā* does not have any similarities with the one that Manandhars celebrate, except for the name.

Mu digu pūjā, the main one, is observed during the months of Baishakh-Jestha (April-May/June), while *Nachā digu pūjā* falls after a span of around four months during Bhadra –Ashwin (September). Among Bajracharyas, equal importance is given to *disi-pūjā* which they celebrate twice a year. First, on the full moon day of *Asar* as *Tāle Disi* and second on the full moon day of Paush as *Pohelā Disi*.²⁴

Newars, other than the Bajracharyas, often get confused about *Disi-Pūjā* and label it as *digu-pūjā* as all the *phukī* -members are same in both. In their own view, these two are different. *Digu pūjā* means a simple celebration when they worship their lineage

²¹ David N.Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest*, New Delhi:Foundation Books, 1994 , p.53

²² Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

²³ Interview with Gyan Ratna Bajracharya, on 2067-4-5

²⁴ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

god and in which all family members can participate, while *disi pūjā* is a secret *pūjā* which can be performed by ordained members only. In their words, *Disi pūjā* is the one which is carried out by the ordained male following vajrayana traditions.²⁵

Kula-devatā is the term referred to the lineage god while god worshipped secretly during *disi pūjā* is called as *Āgama-Devatā*. Newar Buddhists other than Bajracharyas also have *āgama devatā* which they worship in a secret manner only by male family members. In Hindu Newar families and upper class Buddhist families, female members are allowed to participate in such secret *pūjās*. The *disi-pūjā* of Bajracharyas and *Āgamapūjā* of other Newar Buddhist, both are performed in a secret manner under vajrayana tradition. But it is difficult to compare the similarities between these two as no one is willing to share the *pūjā* rituals that are performed there.

Āgama devatā of Newars and *Iṣṭa devata* of non-Newars can be compared and labeled as same. The difference between *Kula-devatā* and *Āgama devatā* or *Iṣṭa devatā* cannot be clearly marked as it can be said that *Kula-devatā* refers to the patron deity of any lineage and which remains same throughout lifetime, while *Āgama devatā* is the one who needs to be worshipped secretly and more precisely.

Most of the people think that both *Kula-devatā* and *Āgama-devatā* (or *iṣṭa devatā*) are similar. The only difference being *kula devatā pūjā* is done openly which involve all the (lineage) members while *Āgama devatā* is worshiped in a closed room by selected family members.²⁶ But some people share different views. In their opinion, *kula devatā* is the one which no one can change, while *Āgama-devata* is based on a person's belief. If a person changes his/her religion, the *Āgama- devatā* changes accordingly.²⁷ Few examples will help to prove this. Most of the Shakyas of Srigha/Nagha worship Kuleshwar Mahadev, a Hindu god as their *Kula-devatā* while

²⁵ Interview with Rajendra Man Bajracharya, on 2067-6-11

²⁶ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

²⁷ Interview with Rajendra Man Bajracharya, on 2067-6-11

having Buddhist tantric deity as their *Āgama devata*.²⁸ Likewise, some Shrestha families who belong to Saiva margi Newars worship Amitabha Buddha of Swayambhu as their lineage god.²⁹

The Bajracharyas of Brahmatole in Kathmandu worship *Atko Nārāyan* as their lineage god. The reason behind, in this case, is-“These people once were Brahmins. After changing the religion to Buddhism, they came and resided there as Buddhists. Now, even though ranked as Bajracharyas, their lineage god remains the same i.e, *Atko Nārāyan*, a Hindu god”. So it can be said that lineage god helps to trace not only the origin but also religion.

Bajracharyas celebrate their *digu-pūjā* twice a year. Main or *Mu digu pūjā* lasts for four or five days. It falls during Baishakh-Jestha (April-May), i.e, during aforementioned worship season of lineage god. The role of priest is carried by Bajracharya who belongs to another Vihar. In some rare cases only, a member of the same vihar works as a priest for another family. But in such cases also, the *Kawo* (group/clan) should be different.³⁰

Most of the groups celebrate *Mu digu pūjā* for four days, with only few exceptions where it could last for five days. *Śrāddha* in the name of late ancestors is done on the fourth day. And such practices are found among the group which has regular source of income for the regulation of the *digu pūjā Guthi*.

The first day is called as *Choyelā Bhu*. After the evening meal, the house is cleaned and then the food restriction starts. In particular, consumption of cooked rice, as well as tomato, onion, garlic, etc. that are considered impure are avoided. As Bajracharyas never eat chicken and its egg, it is not included in the above list. The reason for such restriction is, whenever one offers *pūjā*, they do it through themselves, and if they eat

²⁸ Interview with Daman Shakya, on 2067-6-12

²⁹ Interview with Padam Shrestha, on 2067-5-19

³⁰ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

foods that are labeled as impure, their offering also becomes impure. So, in such *pūjās*, people take bath, wear clean clothes and offer *pūjā* with empty stomach.³¹

After cleaning the house, single male representative from each family sits down in seniority order and then the feast begins. Beaten rice, *Choyelā* and other food items necessary for such feast are prepared.

The day after *Choyelā Bhu* is *Kheley wanegu*. The term *Khele* in Newari means a large open place, like a playground. So *Khele wanegu* is the day when the celebration is done in an outer place that is far away from the city area. Far back, it used to be quite far but now, due to rapid urbanization, these places are within the suburbs. In those places, imageless stones are placed that represent the lineage god.

This specific place ‘*Khele*’ is different among Bajracharyas. Bajracharyas of Jana Bahal and Sabal Bahal go to a place nearby Paropakar in Kalimati. Bahal Saraswati in Durbar Marg and the premises of Guheswori are some other places where Bajracharyas of different Bahals of Kathmandu city observe their *digu pūjā*.³²

A procession is started usually from the *Thākulī*’s house to the site. The procession is led by a low cast *Jogi* who plays a flute like musical instrument called *Muwālī* in Newari. It is believed that the invisible elements present on the ways give way to the procession after hearing the sound of *Muwālī*.³³ Generally, people take this as an indication that the worshipping season of the lineage god has begun.³⁴

Pūjā is started after the bronze silver or gold plated image of lineage god *lun digu* (golden image) is placed over the *lon digu* (stone image) and the ritual of *dyo sālegu* (ritual for inviting the gods for puja) is done. After this, *thākulī naki* (the wife of *Thākulī*) performs the *sindur pūjā*. *Sindur pūjā* is a must in *Digu pūjā*. There are some

³¹ Interview with Baldev Juju, on 2067-11-28

³² Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2066-3-8

³³ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

³⁴ Interview with Baldev Juju, on 2066-11-28

other functions that are obligatory too in the *pūjās* that are conducted either in Bajracharya families or in families where Bajracharyas work as priests.³⁵

Stone gods are then decorated with '*driṣṭi*, *citlā*, *ārwā*'. (Plate:8, 9 and 10). In the past, *karna pata* was also used along with these. It is believed that these items, when added, give the liveliness to the stone image of the god. '*driṣṭi*' is made of silver, it's an eye shaped. '*Citlā*' is made of paper. In this also, pictures of eye is painted. '*ārwā*' is made up of colourful cotton strings and is placed in front of each stone god.³⁶

Throughout the *pūjā* ceremony the vajrayana tradition is followed. Everyone involved in *pūjā* do not take anything until the completion of the *pūjā*. '*Pancapari Sanskar*' and the singing/reciting of '*cacā*' songs are two unique features found among Bajracharyas, Shakyas and Urays.³⁷ Religious songs *Cacā* are sung mainly by male members, but it does not mean female members can not take part in such events i.e singing the *cacā* songs. Besides this singing, *sona pūjā* is also done. In '*Sona pūjā*', certain *pūjā* items are placed in front of the god. These items are not moved until the completion of the *pūjā*. '*Mohni phyegu*' is must in *sona pūjā*. After the completion of a *pūjā*, certain items are taken as *Prasād* called as '*Khaye*'.

Bali is another chief feature of this day's *pūjā*. Animal sacrifice termed as '*Himsā*' is performed in Newar Buddhist families during *digu-pūjā*. It is believed that when any *pūjā* is performed one satisfies his god and also some other elements which need to be satisfied as well. So '*Bali*' which is sacrificing of animals, is specially targeted to those. In almost all Newar Buddhist groups, the main lineage god is not offered blood. This is generally termed as '*Himafa dyo*' meaning not accepting blood/'*bali*'. Bajracharyas also offer goat and duck as *bali*. Besides other gods who are offered the blood, one '*bau – pā*' is placed right from the beginning in which blood is offered.³⁸

³⁵ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

³⁶ Personal observation

³⁷ Interview with Keshav Man Shakya, on 2067-7-8

³⁸ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

‘*Bau-pā*’ is placed for those who are invisibly present in the surroundings and are termed as unsatisfied ghosts. From the priest’s view, ‘*Bali*’ should not be taken so negatively. Everyone has to die one day. The animals that are sacrificed, for special *pūjā* like this, get salvation from rebirth cycle. The priest utters the word ‘*Punar janam pāpam nāsham*’ in the ear of the animal being sacrificed. This means that as they are dying for a good cause i.e, to please the god and in such a good circumstance like *pūjā*, all their sins are forgiven. Nowadays people are campaigning against ‘*Bali*’ but in old days people used to think the sacrificed animal as lucky.³⁹

After ‘*Bali*’ the ritual to formally introduce newlywed daughter- in- law and new born babies is done. Among Bajracharyas, it is called as ‘*Nilaja pūjā*’. Some linseed is cracked in a fire made in *salin* which makes smoke and popping sound. It is believed that such smoke prevents unnecessary elements to enter along with the person.⁴⁰

After this *pūjā*, women with their seniority order starting from the lower start the process of ‘*dutenegu*’. At first, a woman with a broom leads the way while the next one to follow sprinkles holy water from *kalash* and finally, holding the key from ‘*thākulī naki*’, the formal ritual of *dutenegu* is completed. (Plate: 19). In most of the Bajraharya families, only newly born son and newly wed daughter- in- law are formally/ritually introduced and not the daughters.⁴¹

The natal home of the daughter- in- law sends ‘*pūjā ku*’. After the completion of the *pūjā*, she is formally introduced to the senior members of the *guthi* where she offers them usually a coin to show them her respect.

Married off daughters are not entitled to enter the *pūjā* site during the *pūjā* ceremony. In some cases, they could be invited but they won’t have any role in the *pūjā* ceremony.

³⁹ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Interview with Gyan Ratna Bajracharya, on 2067-4-5

After this, '*SikāBhu*' is done. '*SikāBhu*' is an abbreviate form of '*Si kayagu bhoye*', literally meaning 'taking the *Si*'. The eight specific parts of head in case of goat and five in case of duck that has been sacrificed are called as '*si*'. These parts are kept aside and cooked. All the male family members, especially the head of the family members sit down according to their seniority order and receive their '*si*'. No female member is entitled to receive any '*si*'. The '*thākulī naki*' (wife of the *thākulī*) has a major role while distributing these '*si*' during *Sikābhoye*.

Besides these, *catāmari* and *yomari* (both made of rice flour) are other necessary items for *pūjā*. In the past, people used to make several layered colourful *catāmari* which was used as '*Gajur* or *Chatra*'. But nowadays, only single layered round *catāmari* are used while in some places, even it is replaced by '*swārī*'.⁴²

Before '*SikāBhu*', male members of the family perform secret '*āgama-pūjā*'. Such practices are found among Bajracharyas who celebrate their '*digu pūjā*' inside '*vihara*' where their secret '*āgama devatā*' is situated nearby. To enter inside the main shrine of '*āgama devatā*', one should be possessed with '*dekhā*', or else, family members without *dekhā* gather in the main hall just outside the inner main shrine. The *prasād* is taken in the human skull. This one is decorated with gold and jewels and only small middle portion is made up of human skull. Another peculiar feature of taking *prasād* here in *āgama* is all the family members starting with the head or senior most, up to the last one takes the *Prasād* in the same skull without cleaning it.⁴³

Even among Bajracharyas, some groups allow both male and female members to take part in *prasād* taking ceremony, while in others; only male members are entitled to get the *prasād*.⁴⁴

⁴² Interview with Gyan Ratna Bajracharya, on 2067-4-5

⁴³ Personal observation

⁴⁴ Interview with Keshav man Shakya, on 2067-7-8

The third day is '*Kolāgha*'. Though the exact meaning of '*Kolāgha*' yet remains unknown, it is quite unanimous that the word has evolved from the word 'kul' meaning lineage.

Among Bajracharyas, this day is celebrated either at '*thākulī*'s house or according to new trend, at the organiser's house. No extensive *pūjā* rituals are done this day. Only simple *pūjā* is offered to the '*Kula-devatā*' resided in the '*khat*' or '*āsana*' inside the house. Delicious food items are prepared throughout the day. After preparing everything, first portion is put aside in the name of deceased persons in the lineage. It is called '*sika bo*'.⁴⁵

If there is enough income through the asset of the guthi then '*Śrāddha*' is done in the name of the late ancestors. As everyone of a single lineage gathers and celebrate their *digu pūjā*, they take this day as the time to remember their ancestors who passed away. For other groups who do not perform any '*Śrāddha*', the fourth day is marked as '*Bāyegu Bhoye*'. For the group where '*Śrāddha*' is done on the fourth day, '*Bāyegu Bhoye*' is celebrated on the fifth day. The food restriction is finally lifted on this day. '*Bāyegu Bhoye*' literally means, parting feast. So, it is the feast which marks the parting of the lineage members after a grand celebration of their lineage god's worship for 3/4 days.

Bajracharyas do not celebrate '*Nya digu pūjā*'. But Bajracharyas of '*Bhumjim bāhā*', *Wotu* who celebrate '*Mu digu pūjā*' in the afore said '*bāhal*' once in twelve years, celebrate '*Nya digu pūjā*' at the premises of Guheswori in the same day when *mu digu pūjā* falls. So, once in twelve years, they go to Guheswari instead of Bhujim baha.⁴⁶ The concept of *Nya digu pūjā* found among Manandhars which they celebrate fifteen days after the *mu digu pūjā* does not have any similarity with this one except for the name.

⁴⁵ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

⁴⁶ Interview with Gyan Ratna Bajracharya, on 2047-4-5

About four months after *Mu-digu pūjā*, *Nachā digu pūjā* is observed. The specific date and place is chosen in accordance to when and where ‘*khele waneu*’ of *Mu digu pūjā* was celebrated. The *pūjā* rituals are almost similar but lesser in quantity. Similar kind of ‘*sona pūjā*’ is done this time also. If any animal is sacrificed then ‘*Si ka bhu*’ is done. The ‘*dutenegu*’ process is followed if any child is born during these four months or if any male member is married. ‘*Nachā digu pūjā*’ is celebrated only for two days; first day at ‘*khele*’ while the second day is either ‘*Śrāddha*’ and ‘*Bāyegu bhoye*’ or ‘*Bāyegu bhoye*’ only at the host’s house.

Besides *pūjā* items, all the necessary items for feast are prepared by the host family. In any group the number of house hold ranges from 5/7 families to 10/12 also. Each year, one household gets the responsibility to arrange everything for that year’s *pūjā*. And this responsibility passes to another household each year, and this continues in rotation.

5.4.1.2 Shakya

Shakyas are from Newar Buddhist family. Despite the fact that these people regard themselves as Buddhist and have Bajracharya as their priests, certain groups of Shakyas have ‘Kusheswor Mahadev of Dumja’ as their lineage god. Mostly the Shakyas of *Srigha* and *Nagha* have the Hindu diety as their lineage god.⁴⁷ The same diety is worshipped as lineage god by most of the Maharjan families of Kathmandu. These Maharjan families also classify themselves as Buddhists. That might be the reason why the rituals that ‘Shakyas’ perform are similiae to those of the Maharjans. These Shakya families observe the lineage god worship twice a year. First ‘*Mu digu pūjā*’ is celebrated during the actual ‘*digu pūjā*’ season i.e during *Baisakh-Jestha* (April-May), while the second one, the ‘*Nachā digu pūjā*’, during *Paush* (December).

⁴⁷ Interview with Rajan Shakya, on 2067-6-15

‘*Mu digu pūjā*’ lasts for four days. Despite that fact, there have been a lot of changes and at present, the four-day ceremony has been reduced to two day affair.⁴⁸

Bajracharya is the priest for Shakya families so the *pūjā* rituals have similarities with the Bajracharyas also.

Of the four days, the first day is known as *Choyelā Bhu*. *Nau* comes to the house to cut the toe nails which is one of the main parts of purification. In case of Bajracharya, Shakya, Uray and Shresthas, *Nau* is engaged in such work as these castes are considered higher in caste hierarchy. While the idle and upper lower castes call *Nai* to do the same. The restricted food items are not consumed from that evening. After cleaning the house, necessary items for *Choyelā Bhu* is prepared at host’s house. In the evening, male members representing each household meet at the host’s house. They eat the feast and also plan on how they would celebrate for the next three days. The next day is *Khele wanegu*. It’s the main day. The site for celebration is at Kuleswor. One of the unique features of lineage god worship is *dyo sālegu*. This means, to make replica of the god somewhere nearby. As Dumja is far from Kathmandu in Sindhuli district, *Kuleshwar* or Kusheswar Mahadev represents the ‘Dumja Mahadev’. All the groups who worship ‘Dumja Mahadev’ as their lineage god celebrate their *digu pūjā* at *Kuleshwar*.⁴⁹

The *Khele wanegu* day starts with the procession of lineage god carried in its chariot (*khat*). The Juge or kusle leads the procession playing *Muwālī*. Jyapu carry the necessary *pūjā* items. After cleaning the site, stone images of gods are decorated with *Driṣṭi*, *citlā* and *ārwā*. The metal image of lineage god that is carried from *thākulī*’s house is then placed near the stone image. Also, the silver ornaments of the god and *kikimpā*, also made of silver, is placed accordingly, to decorate. Every host family must offer one *kikimpā* to the lineage god. So at present, there are lots of *kikimpā* but

⁴⁸ Interview with Rajan Shakya, on 2067-6-15

⁴⁹ Interview with Daman Shakya, on 2067-6-12

it is up to the lineage members to decide on how many *kikimpā* they would carry to the site. Generally, they would take five or seven *kikimpā* to the site.⁵⁰

As the priest is Bajracharya, the *pūjā* rituals are observed according to bajrayana tradition. The ‘*sona pūjā*’ is done followed by the rituals of *dutenegu*.

Newly married daughter-in-law and newly born son are formally introduced to the lineage god and other members of the lineage with this ritual of *dutenegu*. From her natal home, *pūjā ku* (*pūjā* items) along with curd and sweets are sent for everyone. The daughter-in-law other than Shakya and Bajracharya are not allowed to perform this ritual of *dutenegu* which implies that they are not fully accepted as the member of the guthi.

Animal sacrifice was also practised, but this has been stopped for the last two decades. When it was in practice, usually a goat was offered. The offering of blood was made to the other gods than the lineage god who are also worshipped during the entire *pūjā*. If *Bali* (animal sacrifice) is performed, then in the evening, *sikābhu* is done, in which, the eight specific parts of the sacrificed animal’s head is taken as *prasād* by the senior seven male members and the priest. Priest is given the fifth rank regardless of his age. Common feast is then organized for all the family members. On the subject of hosting, they’ve now started to give all responsibility to one family per year. In the past, all the families used to bring one dish for everyone.⁵¹ The host family had to look for *pūjā* items only and arrange beaten rice and meat for the feast. In their opinion, such trend helped in building togetherness among the lineage members. In spite of this, it became difficult to carry on the same trend and so in the present day, they’ve chosen to tag on like all other Newar families i.e, they will have one host who would look after everything from *pūjā* items to feast. And this turn to host the entire affair rotates among the *Phukī* families. Anyone not wanting to continue can choose to leave the guthi.

⁵⁰ Interview with Rajan Shakya, on 2067-6-15

⁵¹ Interview with Keshav Man Shakya, on 2067-7-8

After *Khele wanegu*, the subsequent day is *Kolāgha* which generally takes place at the host's house. The entire lineage member gathers and spends time together feasting. In the morning, the metal image of the lineage god is worshipped. The *pūjā* rituals are simple. If any family wants to light the small 108 oil lamps (which is considered auspicious in Newari culture) they do it on this day. All the food items are prepared by the lineage member without taking help from an outsider. *Śrāddha* is performed on the last day, in the name of late ancestors. It also depends on the source of income. Among these groups, *digu pūjā* is totally a family affair where all the families involved contribute as much as they can. So there is very little asset either in the form of land or cash deposited in the name of *digu pūjā Guthi*. Before 10-15 years, each family would bring one dish from their home for the feast, so there was no need to calculate the amount spent for feast by the host family. But nowadays, everything for feast is prepared by the host family. So prior to the event, the head of the family or one representative from each family would gather at host's house and estimate the spending. The amount is then given to the host family. After the completion of the event, expenses are not calculated again.⁵²

After *Mu digu pūjā*, *Nachā digu pūjā* is celebrated during the month of *Paush*. It is quite unusual as most Newar families who celebrate *Nachā digu pūjā* do it during Bhadra-Ashwin. But, for this group as far as they remember, they have been celebrating it during *Paush*. Generally it is celebrated for two days. First day is *Choyelā Bhu*, as this is necessary before any important religious ritual. Second day is celebrated just as the *Khele Wanegu* day of *Mu digu pūjā*. During *Nachā digu pūjā*, *Kolāgha* and *Śrāddha* are not performed.

Another 'Shakya' group of same locality, who also worship same deity i.e. 'Kusheswor Mahadev' as their lineage deity, celebrates their *digu pūjā* in a different way. They also celebrate their *digu pūjā* twice a year. However, the routines are

⁵² Interview with Rajan Shakya, on 2067-6-15

different than that of the previous group. For *Mu digu pūjā* which falls on the month of *Baisakh-Jestha*, they observe a three day celebration.

The first day is akin to that of the previous group or most of the Newar families. It is *choyelā bhu*. On this day, the house is cleaned up for the upcoming event. Food restriction starts from this day onwards. Second day is *Khele wanegu*. The place for this celebration is at Kuleshower. The procession with *Jogi* playing *Muwālī* starts from either *thākulī* or host's house. Jyapoo is appointed to carry the *pūjā* items. The small *Khat* (chariot) which used to be carried by the male family members, nowadays is carried by either Jyapoo or is taken in a car. The bronze image of Mahadev along with sets of *silver kikimpās* is what they take to the place of worship.

First, the stone gods present at *khele* are cleaned. Then *driṣṭi*, *citlā* are stuck so as to give lively look. Then the Bajracharya priest performs the *pūjā* and calls on the gods to take their respective positions. This ritual is called *Dyo salegu*. Metal images are then placed in front of stone gods. *pūjā* rituals are also similar. The only difference is on the third day. On this day, they do not gather at *Thākulī*'s or host's house. Instead, they go to the Ganesha temple at Paknajol and the day is called as *Pakna pūjā* and not *Kolāgha*. Although the animal sacrifice to the god is made on the previous day, the *Sikabhu* ritual is done on this day.⁵³ The actual reason is not known as to why this ritual is completed the very next day but one of the reasons could be that *Kuleshwar* area was not within easy reach in old days and sometimes it might get difficult to complete all the rituals in time and return safely before dark. So the trend of completing the *Sikabhu* ritual on the following day might have started as such. During *Sikabhu*, eight parts of the head are taken as *Si* by senior eight male members of that lineage as priest doesn't get his share in this ritual.

Each family gets its turn to host the whole event. This turn rotates among the families every year. Before the main event, expenses are pre-calculated as in the other groups.

⁵³ Interview with Daman Shakya, on 2067-6-12

The amount is then handed over to the host's family for the preparation. No computation is done after the completion and as such, any additional expenses thereafter is borne by the host family.

5.4.1.3 Uray

Uray, the merchant class Newars, celebrate their *digu pūjā* worshipping their *istadeveta*.⁵⁴ While the god worshipped secretly in *āgama* is what they believe their lineage god is. So during the festive season of lineage god worship, they worship their *istadevatā*, which in most of the cases of Urays is either Mahadev or Female Shakti goddess.⁵⁵ The celebration of *Mu* or main *digu pūjā* lasts for more than five days if the preliminary rituals are also added. The nine subcastes of this Uray have almost similar rituals. The largest group among these nine sub castes division is Tuladhars. Their population is mostly concentrated around Ason and they celebrate their *digu pūjā* at Paknajol.⁵⁶ This site is quite near to Sallaghari and Saraswati campus where one can find number of stone lineage gods placed in an open field where Manandhars, Maharjans near the Ason area and even the Shahis' of Lainchour celebrate their *digu pūjā*. Just a decade before this place was left unattended as the Tuladhars faced disturbances to claim their own property after the nearby slums also asserted for it. The present building built by their effort occupies land which they think is one fourth of the main land they once had. Anyway, these days they have built a new building which is named as *Digu Guth Chhen* but the sad part is that almost all the groups who used to celebrate their *digu pūjā* now have stopped celebrating it. Couple of decades ago, these Tuladhars used to celebrate their *Digu pūjā* twice a year with one additional *Layeta Digu pūjā* which can be celebrated anywhere at any time and not compulsorily every year.⁵⁷ *Mu digu pūjā* falls in the month of Baisak- Jestha. On the

⁵⁴ Subarna Man Tuladhar, "Jhi Istadevi Purnachandi wa Degu puja", *Nyata Tuladhar Khwa Pau*, Kathmandu, August 2010, p.24

⁵⁵ Interview with Prem Shanti Tuladhar, on 2068-9-17

⁵⁶ Interview with Prem Hira Tuladhar, on 2068-7-22

⁵⁷ Ibid

very first day of this season an informal gathering is made at the host's house. This is called as *Ailā Naswāyegu* which means the testing of homemade liquor. One representative from each house gathers at the host's house. These people are served with the homemade liquor and some sweets.⁵⁸

Second time, they gather in four days ahead of the main *pūjā*. This time also the gathering is held at the host's house but instead of single representation, all the members are invited. It is called as *Musyā Bhoye*. All the members are offered feast in which brown soybean is especially added. After this ritual, daughter-in-laws are not allowed to stay at their maternal house. The food restriction also begins from this day. Tomatoes, garlic, onion along with other items are not consumed from this day up to completion of the *digu pūjā*. Purifying oneself begins as people get engaged in washing clothes, cutting nails, etc as they prepare themselves for the upcoming event.⁵⁹

First day of the five day season begins with *Choyelā Bhu*. On this day, all the ornaments of the *īṣṭadevatā* are taken out from the store room, cleaned and the gods are properly decorated with it. In the evening, all the members gather at the host's house where preparations are made for *choyelā bhu*. The contents of the *choyelā bhu* is little different in this case. Instead of beaten rice *ctamari* made up of rice flour is used. Members present at the *choyelā bhu* is given a pair of *ctamari* with little *choyelā* and *thon* (homemade liquor). No extra *pūjā* ritual is followed on this day. The following day is the main day during this five day ritual. Main in a sense that this day, all the members of the lineage gather and enjoy partying along with the *pūjā* rituals. The chariot of the god is carried by the male members to the *pūjā* site. In most of the cases, it's the son who carries the chariot but even among Tuladhars, there are variations. The Tuladhars of Hiti Manga, Kisi Dwaka allows their *Bhinā Masta*

⁵⁸ Prem Hira Tuladhar, Jhigu Sanskritisa Digi *puja*(de *puja*), *Jhi Digu Dyah Guthi*, Baishak 2060 B.S, p.43

⁵⁹ Tuladhar, f.n.58, p.43

(daughter's son) to carry the chariot of the god.⁶⁰ Host family arranges all the necessary items for the *pūjā*. Here, the priest is Bajracharya who along with the senior male member of the lineage conducts the *pūjā*. Before completion of the *pūjā*, certain items eg sweets, *sattu* ⁶¹, raddish is offered to crow. Long back, all the members used to remain with empty stomach until the completion of this ritual known as *Ko Cipa thikegu*.⁶² But later, they changed this rule and only the five senior male and female members have to remain empty stomach until the crow ate something from the offering. Along with other rituals, newlywed daughter- in- law and sons whose rice feeding ceremony has been completed are ritually introduced. This is called as *Dutenegu*. From the natal home of daughter- in- law, *pūjā* kit which includes silver *Kikipā* for the god along with sweet and curd is sent. It is said that when they used to offer Bali to the god it was compulsory to send one goat along with the *pūjā* kit. The family whose son has been just introduced ritually should offer egg, *choyelā*, sweets, *khay* etc. In the evening after completing all the rituals, the daughter- in- law is sent to her home along with the *prasād* which includes 60 pairs of *catamari*, egg, *choyelā* and sweets. Later *swārī* replaced *ctamari* as people find it difficult to make the latter one.⁶³

While five senior male and female members are engaged in completing some rituals eg- *kilay caunegu* and *sipha luyegu*, others enjoy the feast that is brought from the host's house. The hosts used to bring both *samay* and *bhoye*. It was not compulsory to consume it there. In case someone wanted to take it home, or when a member was absent, they could pack the feast and take it back for the absentee, which is known as *thayā kāyegu*. In later years, such system was replaced by only *samay* and only for those who are present at the site. *Bhoye* includes *nyatā ghāsā* and especially the *sattu* is added by the senior female member called as *thākulī naki*. After completing the

⁶⁰ Interview with Prem Shanti Tuladhar, on 2068-9-17

⁶¹ Stupa like structure made from millet flour

⁶² Interview with Subarna man Tuladhar, on 2068-8-11

⁶³ Tuladhar, f.n..58, p.44

entire rituals, god is taken back to the host's house. On the way back, especially the daughter-in-law carries the oil lamp while others lit the incense. God is placed in its *āsana* (place cleaned and prepared for the same purpose). Members present there then recite the holy mantras called as *tuta* and the whole ritual for that day concludes.

Next day is *Kolāgha* when *pūjā* is offered to the god at host's house. The *pūjā* is done in quite a secret manner and is called as *Nyaga Sonā pūjā*. Members who have matrimonial relation with other than their own caste are not allowed to be part of this *pūjā*. In the evening, all the members enjoy the feasts which include cooked rice for the first time in 2/3 days.

Kolāgha is followed by *Mu Bhoye*. On this day, special feast is prepared with *Chyata Ghāsā* and number of different food items. This day also if anyone wants to take the feast home they can take it. The main feature of this day is the giving of the *Pā Bo* i.e., formally giving the responsibility to host the next year's event to the head of the next year's host family.⁶⁴

On the following day, once again, all the family members gather at the *pūjā* site. This day is called as *Caturthi wanegu*. After completing simple *pūjā* rituals, they eat *samay*. On this day, all the households contribute a certain sum to purchase the seasonal fruits which is offered to the god. After completing this, all the members return to the host's house before sunset.

The last day of the five day celebration is called as *Misā Bhoye* literally meaning the feast for the ladies. The celebration is at that year's host house where early in the morning, people gather with the *pūjā* kit from their house. *pūjā* is started after all the related households have sent their *pūjā* kits. Host offers a special snack for those who come there with the *pūjā* kit and this snack is called as *Khaulā bo*, which contains beaten rice, garlic, soybean and few pieces of meat. After lunch, especially ladies get busy with the cleaning and storage of the ornaments of the god which includes

⁶⁴ Tuladhar, f.n.58, p.45

Kikinpā. In the evening, dinner is served which includes a pickle made of garlic paste called as *Lābha mu*. This inclusion also marks the end to the five day long restriction to such items. In this way the five day long *Digu pūjā* celebration concludes.

In addition to this *Mu digu pūjā*, Urays also have *Lasatā Digu pūjā* and *Nachā Digu pūjā*.⁶⁵ *Lasatā Digu pūjā* is similar to that of *Nya Digu pūjā* of Manandhars. As the name suggests (*Lasatā* in Newari means happiness) there is no hard and fast rule to celebrate this *Lasata Digu pūjā*. When celebrated, it is a single day affair where married daughters along with their children (*Mhyamasta* and *Bhināmasta*) are specially invited⁶⁶. This time the groups who celebrate their *Mu Digu pūjā* at Paknajol go to Battisputali for the celebration of the same. *Nachā Digu pūjā* is celebrated for a single day at Paknajol *Khele*. All the male members of the group gather at the *pūjā* site and the *pūjā* rituals begin which is carried by the Bajracharya priest. After the completion of the *pūjā*, all the members eat *samay* (snack) in which most of the seasonal fruits are included along with one small fresh fish. *Nachā Digu pūjā* concludes after taking dinner at the host's house.

⁶⁵ Interview with Subarna Man Tuladhar, on 2068-8-11

⁶⁶ Interview with Prem Hira Tuladhar, on 2068-7-22

S.N	Caste	Digu Khya
1	Tuladhar (Asan)	Paknajol, Lumadhi, Purnachandi, Mhepi, Lazimpat, Bagdarbar, Chhetrapati, Kamaladi, Sitapailā, BaghBhairava, Bhimdhunga, Chandeswori(Patan), Hakubaha, Pachali
2	Tuladhar (Nyata)	Bhrungkhe1
3	Sthapit	Dhumbakhya, Pashupati Ramchand, Machali, Lumadhi, Pachali, Baghvairab, Kanga, Kirtipur, Kankeswor, Bagdarbar, Bijeswori, Lakhutirtha, Lazimpat
4	Tamrakar	Lazimpat, Nyata Kanga, Kanga, Lumadhi, Maru
5	Kansakar	Lumadhi
6	Sikhrakar	Paknajol, TeBaha, Bijeswori,
7	Baniya	Lazimpat, Kanga
8	Sindurakar	Lazimpat
9	Silakar	Kanga, Dhumbakhya, Paknajol, Bagh Bhairava, Kanga
10	Silalik	Dhobichor

Source: Lochan Tara Tuladhar⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Lochan Tara Tuladhar, *Suya Digu Dya Gana* (Who's lineage god where?), Jhi Digu Dya Guthi Da Pau, April 2012, p. 82

5.4.1.4 Pradhans of Bhagwanbahal

The Pradhans of Bhagwan Bahal who although come under the higher class of Shrestha i.e., Chhathari Shrestha, follow Buddhism. Major portion of Pradhan households today still exists around Vikramshila Mahavihar, a re known shrine for Buddhists. It is not known whether this is the reason why they followed Buddhism. The inscriptions found in and around this place date back to Lichhavi era. It is clear from these inscriptions that the people living in this area were Buddhist from that time. These people worship Amitabha Buddha of Jamacho as their lineage god.⁶⁸ The annual worship of the lineage god is done on the day of *Sithī Nakha*. As this day is the last day which marks the end of the lineage god worship season, most of the groups that celebrate their *digu pūjā* this day either are separated from the main stream or have forgotten the actual day. The present generation of this Pradhan group doesn't know whether this last day was opted later. Before 4/5 decades, these people used to go to Jamacho, a hillock situated in the western Kathmandu to celebrate their *digu pūjā*. As Jamacho is far from Bhagwan Bahal and with no means of transport, mainly the male family members with the help of Jyapus of that area used to walk all the way through and this was indeed very difficult. So such trend was discontinued, but from when it ceased is not clear. After that, these groups started to worship the replica of Jamacho at the *Āgama Chowk* of Bhagwan Bahal individually.⁶⁹ As the *pūjā* was done individually, there was no question of a common feast. In the past few years, this group has restarted to celebrate this ceremony in a group. The main reason for this change was the sentiment that even among the same lineage, the members were like strangers. Besides such gatherings, there was no occasion which helped to create that bonding of togetherness amongst its members. They strongly feel that the trend of celebrating lineage god worship in a group should be sustained. Now they celebrate it

⁶⁸ Bhuwan Lal Pradhan, *Kathmandau Upatyakaka Kehi Saskritik Chirka Mirka* (Some Cultural facts of the Kathmandu Valley), Dr. Sumitra Manandhar Gurung, 2064 B.S.p.

⁶⁹ Interview with P Pradhan, on 2067-3-25

on the last day of the worship season i.e, *Sithī Nakha*.⁷⁰ In the morning, all the members gather at the *Āgama Chowk* and the main lineage god i.e, Amitabha Buddha is worshipped. All the food items that are offered to the god are made without salt. *Wo* is specially made for this. After the *pūjā* at the *Āgama Chowk*, *pūjā* at the *Āgama Chhe* is started which is carried out by the Bajracharya priest. There was no clear provision for the conduction of the *pūjā* by either priest or *thākulī* but when this group restarted this, they appointed a priest to perform the *pūjā*.⁷¹ They don't make any animal sacrifice inside the premises of Bhagwan Bahal. So there is no need to do the *Sikabhu* ritual. The only time animal i.e, goat is sacrificed in Bhagwan Bahal is once a year and that too is offered not to the main deity but to the *Jātiga Agimā* situated near the outer main door of Vikramshila Mahavihar.⁷²

Another important ritual of *digu pūjā*, the formal ritual performed for entrance of the newlywed daughter-in-law, is not found among this group. The main reason for this is the ritual of *dutenegu* is done on the very day of marriage. Up to now a daughter-in-law from other castes that belongs to higher class Shrestha i.e, *Chathari* are only accepted. Though there are daughter-in-laws from other castes also, this process of *dutenegu* is not followed in their case and in case of their death the lineage members are not obliged to follow the death pollution. There is a special door at this vihar from which the daughter-in-laws are taken and the remaining rituals are performed in this house as they believe this house to be their ancestral house as they call it *Kula Chhe* in Newari.⁷³

⁷⁰ Interview with Riddhi B. Pradhan, on 2067-3-25

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Interview with P Pradhan, on 2067-3-25

⁷³ Interview with Riddhi B. pradhan, on 2067-3-25

5.4.1.5 Dangol

Among the farmer caste two cases were examined. First group had long been settled here but their lineage god is at Dumja which is far from Kathmandu in Sindhuli district. They worship Kusheswar Mahadev of Dumja as their lineage god. This clearly indicates that they have migrated from that place to Kathmandu. At present they go to *Kuleshwar* where the replica of the god is established. An elderly member of this group recalls the incident which was the reason for the making of this replica: Even the families originally from Dumja who settled here, once a year went to Dumja for the celebration of lineage god worship. As there was no means of transportation, they would have walked all the way through. Once, a lady left her breastfed child at home in a rush. When they returned, may be after a week, the child was already dead, which left all the family members stunned. As it was also impossible to leave the ritual of worshipping the lineage god, they realized to make one replica somewhere near to avoid such incidents and also to continue the tradition.⁷⁴ Even after making the replica and giving continuation to the rituals they still consult with some astrologers just to be satisfied and if the astrologer says something was missing in the rituals, it is compulsory to perform everything at Dumja again. But chances of such incidents are very slim.

The second group worship goddess Annapurna as their lineage god. The temple of Annapurna is situated at Asan in central Kathmandu and the groups which worship this god as their lineage god lives in nearby areas. The open space or *Khele* for these groups is at Sallaghari, Paknajol.

First, about the rituals that the first group observes: This group celebrates their *digu pūjā* twice a year: *Mu Digu pūjā* and *Nachā Digu pūjā*. *Mu*, the main one, falls during the months of Baisakh-Jestha (April-May) and is continued for five days while the *Nachā Digu pūjā* is celebrated after four months and this one only for a single day.

⁷⁴ Interview with Satya N. Dangol, on 2067-2-18

The five day celebration starts with *Choyelā Bhu* mostly at the host's house. Generally this day or time is taken as the time to talk or plan about the celebration for next four days. Mainly the male head of the family takes part in this. These people gather at the host's house in the evening. House is cleaned and from then onwards the food restriction is started which partly ends on the fourth and fifth day. Chicken, egg, tomato and garlic, include the list which is totally excluded up to the completion of every ritual.

As these groups have made replica of their lineage god at *Kuleshwar*, the second day celebration takes place at *Kuleshwar*. This day starts with the procession from the host's house with *Jogi* playing *Muwālī* and the male members carrying the chariot containing the gold plated copper image of the *Shiva Linga* to *Khele* i.e., *Kuleshwar*. The area is cleaned with *Sakhwa chu*, while the floor is coated with red clay. *Driṣṭi*, *citlā* and *ār wā* are stuck at the proper place. Lineage god is decorated with the *mukut* and *kikimpā* made of silver. A priest, always *Bajracharya*, is appointed to carry out the *pūjā*. *Sona pūjā* is performed in which every household brings one *thapi* along with the *pūjā*. All the *thapis* are then placed in front of the main god and the *pūjā* is started. These days, at some places, *ghau* has replaced *thapi*. After the preliminary *pūjā*, the process of *dutanegu* starts which includes the newlywed daughter- in- law, son and the newly born son. In case of daughters, they have to offer the *Salā Pā* after the completion of their *Ihi*. Boys aged mostly between 5-9 years are given *Kayeta* during this event. ⁷⁵*Nau* (a barber) comes at the site to take the hair of the boy which is cut during the ritual. For this they give the *Bāli* to the *Nau* every year. After this, it is not necessary in a Buddhist Newar community to perform *Bratabandha* ritual for the boys. Married daughters are entitled to participate in this event only for a single time after the marriage while in some other cases they can participate until they give birth to their first child.

⁷⁵ Interview with Satya N. Dangol, on 2067-2-18

This group has a different way of performing the ritual of *Dutanegu*. *Thākulī* (head of the lineage) hands over the *pital pāthi* (brass container, used for measurement), containing beaten rice, fruits and sweets to his wife i.e, *Thākulī* Naki, who in turn hands over the same to the newlywed daughter- in- law and makes the formal entrance. From the natal home of the daughter- in- law, especially curd is sent occasionally with roti. *Salā Pā* which is usually given to all the *Chutin* at this day is not found among this group. The ritual of giving *Salā Pā* is conducted immediately after marriage. The groom's side organizes one feast called as *Dutigu Bhoye* in which the daughter- in- law gives this *Salā Pā* to the *Chutin* symbolizing the ritual introduction to the members of her husband's lineage.⁷⁶

After *Dutanegu*, *Bali* is offered to god Bhairava which is at the left side of the main god. The main lineage god is offered vegetarian offerings only. Blood is offered to Bhairava and Astamatrika gan but not to the lineage god. Only *ghya kasti* (Ghee and honey) and special kind of flower which is found only during this time is offered to the lineage god. Along with this *Caumari/Catāmari* is also offered. For this, not only the host family but all the families must bring certain amount of *Caumari/Catāmari*. After the completion of the *pūjā* it is distributed among the families according to the number of family members. A special kind of balance called *Azimo* is used to measure the weight.⁷⁷ The sacrificed animal is then cleaned and cooked by the male members of the lineage without taking any help from the outsiders. Eight specific parts of the head are then separated and cooked separately. *Tikā* is taken as *prasād* from the priest, in which *Mohni sinha* is the main one, which is collected from the smoke of a light lit in a *makaca*. Whenever a *sona pūjā* is done, this *mohni sinha* is must. A small cotton stick along with oil is taken in the *mākacā* and is lit throughout the *pūjā*. Oil level is checked time to time as the amount of *mohni sinha* decides the success of the *pūjā* ceremony. If there is very little *mohni* in the *salin* in which it is collected, it is taken as

⁷⁶ Interview with Satya N. Dangol, on 2067-2-18

⁷⁷ Interview with Satya N. Dangol, on 2067-2-18

bad luck or dissatisfaction of the god. And if there is profuse amount of it, it is taken as an auspicious sign.

After all this *pūjā*, common feast begins. Though the responsibility to look after every aspect for the *pūjā* is given to one certain family each year on a rotation basis, all the families bring certain cooked food items from their house which is decided or discussed on the first day i.e, *Choyelā Bhu*. The main responsibility of the host is to make arrangements for *pūjā* and food items specifically beaten rice and meat which is consumed considerably in larger amount. Besides these food items one another important job is the production of homemade liquor called *Thon* in Newari. The family which takes the responsibility for the production of this is called as *Sulin*. This turn is either rotated among the households or is given to a certain family for a couple of years. It completely depends on mutual understanding. The storage of the *pūjā* and feast items is done by the male members especially the younger generation who are called as *Bhari*.⁷⁸

Before starting the common feast, certain groups have tradition of offering it first to the crow. The reason behind this in their opinion is that as they have adopted a new place for the celebration, they believe that the lineage god in the form of crow comes there to accept the *pūjā* and feast. They even take this as the acceptance of *pūjā* by the god which is possible only when everything is done according to the rules and also in pure manner. Another group belonging to same caste have strange rule. They have to offer the samay to jackal first. As it is difficult to find a jackal in the city area nowadays they bring a jackal made of wood with them. This wooden jackal is offered first and then other members can take the feast.⁷⁹

The feast is then distributed among the family members and even the members who couldn't make it to the *Khele* get their share which is taken back to home by other

⁷⁸ Interview with Satya N. Dangol, on 2067-2-18

⁷⁹ Some of the Maharjan groups who celebrate their *Digu puja* at Bhadrakali have this tradition of offering the first portion of the feast to the Jackel.

family members of the same family. After the feast, comes the turn for the ritual of *Sikabhu* where already separately cooked eight parts of the sacrificed animal's head are taken as *Prasād* by seven senior family members and the priest.

The third day is called as *Kolāgha* and is celebrated at the host's house. In early morning, mostly the male members gather and perform *pūjā* to the lineage god. Then, all the family members join them in common feast throughout the day. Even in the evening, they pack their share of food items which they take back to their houses.

On the fourth day, *Śrāddha* is performed in the name of all the lineage members who have passed away. Married daughters along with their kids are also invited. Beside *Śrāddha*, there is no any other *pūjā* function observed on this day. *Śrāddha* is conducted at host's house but the ritual is performed by the *thākulī*. The fifth or final day is called as *Bāyegu bhoje*. This day *thākulī* shows all the statements related to the income of the *guthi* and expenditure of the event. It is up to the members what they want to do, either pay the amount themselves or deduct the expenditure from the income of the *guthi*. The feast prepared for this day may include some of the items which are restricted on earlier days, but chicken, egg, tomato, onion are still not consumed on this day. In this way the five day affair of the lineage god worship comes to an end.

5.4.1.6 Maharjan

The second group of Jyapu caste who celebrate their *digu pūjā* at Sallaghari, Paknajol also celebrate their *digu pūjā* twice a year. The first one is celebrated during the Nepali month of Baisakh-Jestha (April-May,) and the second one during Bhadra/Ashwin. This is the only group who has not altered the rituals as it used to be decades ago; at least the rituals related to the god. They have not made any changes in the *pūjā* rituals but for the feast some changes have occurred. For instance, on the first, fourth and fifth day, instead of involving all the family members in the feast,

only the male head of the family participates.⁸⁰ The *Mu digu pūjā* is a celebration that continues for five days. But the preparation starts even before. Two weeks before the main event, the two families (incase the number of families in the group is large otherwise a single family) which had the responsibility for the production of homemade liquor *thon* starts collecting the raw materials for the same. This process is called *thoki kayegu*.⁸¹ Every household is bound to give certain amount of rice depending upon the number of family members. This responsibility also rotates among the households. The family which gets its turn for the first year is called as *lā pā* who in its second year is called as *byon pā*.

The first day starts with the cleaning of the house, especially the host's house, where all the preparations are made. *Nau* comes for the purpose of the cutting of toe nails especially of the ladies. After cutting the nails, they put *ala* which is a red coloured powder used for the purpose of decoration. For such purposes, these *nau* are paid annually. In the late evening, feast is prepared with *cyatā ghasṭā* i.e, beaten rice with eight other food items which include *choyelā*, *musyā*, *pālu*, *fasi*, *waucā*, *khaipi*, *caipi* and *wo*. Like other groups, this group also forbids some food items during this *pūjā* period like: chicken, egg, tomato, onion, garlic etc and from this day, the food restriction starts. Everything related to the celebration of the *pūjā* is discussed here, like which family will bring what food items so that there is no repetition. All the timings are fixed in this evening as in older days the communication was not that easy as it is nowadays.

The next day is *khele wanegu* when all the family members gather at the open place at Sallaghari. It is believed that long back; they used to celebrate this day at Asan, where their lineage goddess Annapurna is, as they used to live in the periphery of Asan. But as the place is in the middle of the town and Ason was central area even during medieval period, so the government asked them to celebrate this day somewhere else

⁸⁰ Interview with Nhuchhe N. Maharjan, on 2067-2-18

⁸¹ Interview with Maila Maharjan, on 2067-2-18

far from there. The government also gave some land in compensation.⁸² The present area where they celebrate their *digu pūjā* is the same place which was given to them by the Government as compensation. Some other caste also shares the nearby places to celebrate their *digu pūjā* but they didn't share this issue of compensation. So it is not clear that only this group was offered the place by the government or it is only a myth that has been transferred from generation to generation. But still they have one practice that the *pūjā* is started only after the *thākulī* brings the incense lit up in the Annapurna mandir. Individual *pūjā ku* in *kala* is brought from each household which includes one *thāpi*. During the *sona pūjā* these *thāpis* are also placed in front of the lineage god and *sona pūjā* is performed by the Bajracharya priest. This group still gives *bali* of a goat to the lineage god. If possible, a black goat is chosen. After offering it to the god, the intestine of the animal is taken out. The intestine is then blown and tied at both ends and put as a garland to the lineage god and other gods.⁸³ (Plate: 13&15).

Then the ritual of *dutanegu*, the ritual admission of the newly wed daughter- in- law and new born sons, is done. It is not compulsory incase of daughters. Daughter- in- laws from other than their caste are not accepted. These families whose son or daughter- in- laws is newly admitted in the *guthi* must distribute *lākhāmari*, a special kind of sweet, in order to share the happiness. At the end of the *pūjā* when *thākulī* offers flowers to the god, all the members also participate. Then, *prasād* is taken from the priest which also includes the *mohni sinha*.

Sikābhu is then done in which the priest also participates and gets his share regardless of his age. He sits in the fifth position and gets *thunā* (mouth) of the sacrificed animal i.e, goat. This day, they don't get or take the remaining food to their house. After all the rituals, all the members return along with the lineage god that is carried in the chariot. Then in the host's house, lineage god is kept for the next few days, which

⁸² Interview with Nhuchhe N. Maharjan, on 2067-2-18

⁸³ Personal observation

otherwise remains at the *thākuli*'s house. With this, all the rituals for that day are concluded.

The second day is called as *Kolāgha*. Few persons from this group share their views about this term. On the third day, they gather at the host's house early in the morning. Then the remaining portions of *catāmari*, duck's egg, sweets, *samaybaji* from yesterday's feast are consumed. As the food taken in the morning is called *kaula* in newari, they think the word *Kolāgha* is the exerted form of *kaula*. But such practice is not found among other newar castes and they also call this day as *Kolāgha*. So this interpretation cannot be fully assured. They don't have much *pūjā* rituals on this day besides the morning *pūjā* of the lineage god done at the host's house. Though there is food restriction, some of the groups have started adding onion for good taste from this day.

On the fourth day, this group doesn't perform *Śrāddha*. Rather, they celebrate it in a very unique way. This day called as *javu*, is also called as *kāya masta bhoje nakā pitanegu*. This feast is a special treat for the sons.⁸⁴ This is because for the last few days, they have worked very hard for the preparation of the *pūjā*, as no outsider is allowed to do any kind of work, they are the only ones who organize everything including cooking also. So this day is especially dedicated to them. Some of the groups also have the tradition of *Śrāddha* and are continuing it but in most cases it is the aforementioned feast for the sons. It is because of this feast where they ask for a long break from festivals, the next festival is *gathemangal* which is around four months later.

Maharjans of Kirtipur

The way of celebrations is somewhat different in Kirtipur. It is observed only once in a year and in some cases it is not during *Baisakh–Jestha* but in the month of

⁸⁴ Interview with Nuchhe N. Maharjan, on 2067-2-18

Mangsir.⁸⁵ Some groups have unique feature of going to Jalavinayak on the third day which is similar to the Shakyas of Srigha. They call it as Koyena wanegu.⁸⁶ Actually Koyena Ganedyo is the Newari name for Jala Vinayak. After the second day where they go to *Khele* at Kirtipur, the same lineage members gather at the premises of this temple on the following day which is almost a kilometer away from the main Kirtipur area. Although chicken and egg along with other certain food items are not consumed during digu *pūjā*, here, bali given to the god is chicken. This trend of going to Jalavinayak might have started to formally conclude the digu *pūjā*. As the god Ganesha is taken as the god who helps to conduct any work without any hindrance, these people might have started such trend to thank god for the successful completion of their digu *pūjā*. As Bali is offered to the god, *Sikābhu* is done in the evening. In case of chicken, five *Si* are distributed that comprises - head, two wings and two legs.

5.4.1.7 Manandhar

Among the professional castes which include seven professional castes, only Manandhars of Kathmandu are still continuing the *digu pūjā* ritual without many changes. Altogether, there are eleven main localities in which the Manandhars of Kathmandu are divided.⁸⁷ Besides little changes, there are no major differences in the rituals that the different groups of this same caste follow while celebrating *digu pūjā*. Most of the groups observe *digu pūjā* three times a year, which definitely is very unique as such practice is rarely found among any other Newar castes. Along with *Mu digu pūjā* and *Nachā digu pūjā*, these people also celebrate *Nya digu pūjā*.⁸⁸ It is believed that this one is the additional feature, which is added to enjoy the family gathering with less *pūjā* rituals and restrictions in food items. Though considered as Buddhists, few sections of this group, worship Narayan, Ganesha and Mahadeva as

⁸⁵ Interview with Julum Maharjan, on 22Aug2010

⁸⁶ Interview with Dharma Maharjan, on 2067-7-9

⁸⁷ Jit Bahadur Manandhar, *Manandhar Nibanda Muna* (Collection of Essays on Manandhars), Kathmandu: Tara Devi Manandhar, N.S. 1124, p.166

⁸⁸ Personal participation

their lineage god which are Hindu deities. But most of them have female goddesses as their lineage god like Gujeshwari, Mhepi, Manamayeju, Manmaneshwari, Kankeshwari etc. *Nya digu pūjā* which is celebrated for a single day is observed at the premises of the main temple of the lineage god. As groups which have Mhepi Ajima as their lineage god go to the Mhepi temple, while those with the Ganesh of Suryavinayak at Bhaktpur as their lineage god, go there and so on. In other two occasions i.e, *Mu* and *Nachā digu pūjā*, only the imageless stones' gods, the *Loo dyo* at *khele* representing the lineage god, is worshipped. The *Mu digu pūjā* falls on the month of Baisakh- Jestha (April-May) and is celebrated for five days. Though *choyelā bhu* is taken at the first day of *Mu digu pūjā*, when asked about the *digu pūjā*, much importance is given to the second day when it is celebrated at the *khele*. In some groups, before *choyelā bhu*, there is one another *pūjā* called as *La Cā pūjā* which usually falls a week before the main *pūjā*.⁸⁹ On this day one family member, usually the male head of the family, gathers at the host's house in the morning. Then with simple *pūjā* kit they go to the *khele* and worship the god. The main aim of this *pūjā* seems to have a meeting with all the heads of the family so as to discuss how they would celebrate the whole event. A simple feast is organized at the host's house.

In this group, the responsibility of the host is to prepare the *pūjā* items and necessary things for the feast. The host starts collecting *thoki* from every member-household some fifteen days before. *Thoki* is rice which is used as the raw material for the production of the home made liquor *thon*. It is obligatory for all the families to give certain amount of rice as *thoki* for the same.

On the first day, *choyelā bhu* is celebrated at the host's house. In the evening, after dinner, male family heads of all the families gather. House is cleaned and feast is prepared which includes *choyelā* (roasted buff meat) and beaten rice along with *wo*,

⁸⁹ Prem Sayami, "Manandhar (Sayami) Samudaya ya Mhasika" (An introduction to Manandhar Community), *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu., 1127N.S. p.249

*kasu, cai pi, khai pi, pālu, musyā, wauchā, bhuti and thon.*⁹⁰ All the male members sit according to their seniority by age for the feast, with the priest taking the first position. After the feast, certain other responsibilities are also given to certain families. The *sulin pa* is given to the host of the previous year, and *bhari pa* is given to the next year's host. The main job of the *sulin pa* is to make *thon* (homemade liquor). In the same evening, host family hands down the *poko* prepared with the rice collected as *thoki*. Rice is first cooked in the steam and then mixed with *marcā* (yeast) to ferment it. This mixture, after certain time, when mixed with water gives *thon*. The *bhari pa* family is responsible for the right management of the entire materials of the feast. Besides these two families, all other families are also involved directly or indirectly. From cooking to serving, everything is done by the inside members and no help is taken from outside.

The second day is *khele wanegu*. Male head of the family from each member household and other male members, first gather at the host's house from where they carry the metal image of the lineage god in a chariot. This metal image is decorated with *mukut, mo ma* and *kikimpā* made up of silver. *Jogi* leads the procession playing *muwālī* while *jyapu* carries the *pūjā* items in his *kharpan* (carriage). All other members follow with burning incense in their hands. After reaching at *khele*, the place is first cleaned and then painted with *syucā* and *sakhwa chun*. *Syucā* is red soil used to paint the floor which is done in any auspicious occasion. *Sakhwa chun* is limestone. It is mixed with water and poured on the stone gods present at the *khele*. (Plate: 1). Then to give the liveliness *driṣṭi*, and *citlā* are stuck to the stone image of the god and *ār wā* is placed in front of them. Among certain groups, it is compulsory to put the *gungu nya* for the ritual of *dyo sālegu*.⁹¹ After which, the metal images of the gods are put in front of the stone gods. *Bajracharya* is the priest and *pūjā* rituals are performed according to vajrayana tradition. If the head of the lineage has completed the process

⁹⁰ Tina Manandhar "Thahitkā Manandharharu ko Kuldevata puja : Ek Aadhyān" (A study on the Kuldevata puja of Manandhars of Thahity), Unpublished dissertation submitted to NeHCA, Tribhuvan University, 2062 B.S., p. 25

⁹¹ Personal Observation

of *thākulī luyegu* then the *pūjā* is carried out by him and a priest is not needed. At first certain items are placed in front called as *sonegu*. These items include *sukundā*, *khaye korin* (small earthen pot containing a mixture of curd, oil and salt), *thāpi* (special kind of metal pot containing thon) and on top of it, a plate containing small pieces of *choyelā*, ginger and black soyabean is placed. (Plate:2). Alongside these things, a lamp known as *mākacā* especially used for this process is placed in which a cotton stick dipped in mustard oil is lit and is covered with *Salin* (small earthen bowl type which is principally used to take liquor in any traditional newar cuisine). The light remains burning as long as the *pūjā* continues. The fumes are collected in the *Salin* which is taken as main *prasād* at last. It is called as *mohni sinha*.

In the *pūjā* items, red powder sindur is not frequently used. It is only the *bhuyu sinha* and *mhasu sinha* that are used. At first these *tikā* are put and then *gojā* are placed in front of each god. A special kind of incense is placed in this *gojā*. Fruits and other sweets along with *yomari* and *catāmari* made from rice flour are offered to the god. Then *swan chayegu* (offering of flowers) is done. In the presence of all the lineage members, *thākulī* puts the flowers. After that, *samay* which includes *syabaji*, beaten rice, *choyelā*, soyabean and ginger are offered to the gods. Then all the members, one by one, bow to the lineage god. Now the ritual of *dutenegu* starts, which, these groups call as *dukāyegu*. Both these words have similar meaning. In this regard there are some differences in different groups; some groups have a rule for ritual introduction to both girl and boy born within a year along with newlywed daughter- in- law, while in some other groups it is done only for boys and daughter- in- laws. In some groups, it is only for daughter- in- laws. Whatever the rule may be, *thākulī naki*, the wife of the head of the lineage along with two other senior women of the same group, start the process of *dukāyegu*. (Plate: 19, 20). One of the women cleans the floor with broom while another sprinkles holy water. Then the *thākulī naki* holds the key in one end while the other end is held by daughter- in- law. If there are more, others follow the first one. They first offer their *pūjā* to the god then pay respect to the senior

lineage members especially the head couple of each household by giving the *salā pā* as a sign of respect. This includes little beaten rice along with one fruit and one sweet and *dakṣinā*, usually a coin. These things are sent from the natal home of the bride.⁹²

Another significant feature of this *digu pūjā* is the bratabanda of the sons. Bratabanda which is a grand affair for Hindu Newars, is not so significant to this group. It is simply performed in this day with the priest performing the rituals for the same. (Plate: 17). For girls, regardless of the place where *ihī* is performed, it is believed to be completed only when the *sala pa* and *kamo ka* used and worn during *Ihī* are offered to the lineage god by the girl herself. After this, animal sacrifice or *bali* takes place. Animal is sacrificed not to the main lineage god but to Ganesh as the main lineage god is taken as Buddhist deity who does not take blood offering i.e., *himaphya dyo*. During the entire process of *bali*, the main god is covered and cow's milk is poured. This is done by the *thākulī* and *nakulī* (the second head of the lineage next to the *thākulī*). Almost every time it is the same person who gives *bali* and gets the tail during *sikabhu*. One other thing which is marked very carefully is that if his wife is pregnant, he cannot perform *bali*, so any other member would have to perform this ritual. With *bali*, all the *pūjā* rituals are finished. Priest puts *tikā* and *mohni sinha* on the forehead of all the members while the *thākulī naki* puts the *bhuyu sinha* to all the ladies. Among Newars, in such *pūjā*, even unmarried daughters can put *bhuyu sinha* as sindoor; this ritual is known as *sincho tayekegu*.

Then feast starts first with *samaya*. Certain groups, especially those who worship Mhepi ajima as their lineage god, have a tradition of offering the first portion of the feast to the crow. Only after a crow comes and takes something from that offering, can other members can start taking it. It is believed that the crow represents the god and if everything is done in a right way and if god is satisfied with the *pūjā* rituals, crow will come before long. The first item that is consumed is *khyā* which is made with the items that were placed in *sona pūjā*. The curd mixed with little salt, mustard

⁹² Manandhar, f.n.90, p.27.

oil and homemade liquor *thon* is put in a small earthen bowl *Salin*. In this, small pieces of *choyelā*, soyabean and ginger are also added. Then *samay* which includes beaten rice, *choyelā*, potato curry, soyabean and small pieces of ginger is taken.

After this, preparations are made for another feast. This time, families can take this to their home. According to the number of family members, feast is distributed. If new daughter-in-law is introduced then special curd is added to the feast by her family. *Sikabhu* comes next, for which preparations are made i.e, the eight specific parts of the head of the sacrificed animal is cooked separately. While some are engaged in this cooking and kids are busy playing, senior male members start singing *dāphā mye*. (see Appendix C). These *dāphā mye* are the religious songs. These songs related to the lineage god are sung. While singing the *dāphā mye*, certain musical instruments are also played. The similar type of musical instruments and singing of songs are found among the Jyapoos also. The final ritual of this day is *sikābhu*. Though all the male members sit in their seniority order according to their age, priest gets the first position regardless of his age but he is given the *si* of fifth rank.⁹³

At the end *pā bo-* responsibility to host the next year's *digu pūjā* is given. This year's host hands over the responsibilities to the next host formally. Then all the metal images that were taken from the *thākulī*'s house carried in a chariot are again placed back in the chariot. Then the procession back to the house starts. All other members follow this procession with lit incense. Now the god is taken to the host's house where it is ritually taken inside the house by the wife of the *thākulī* and *nakulī*. God is placed over the *āsana* after which the god is offered with the *sagun*. This *sagun* includes boiled duck's egg, small fried fish and *thon*. Usually on this day, one male member from each household sleeps where the god is kept.⁹⁴

The third day is *Kolāgha*. On this day, *pūjā* is done at the host's house. From each household, *pūjā* in *kala* is brought. There are not much *pūjā* rituals on this day. Only

⁹³ Interview with Satya N. Dangol, on 2067-2-18

⁹⁴ Interview with Tri Ratna Manandhar, on 2068-6-1

simple *pūjā* is held in the morning. On completion of all *pūjā* rituals, *thākulī* gives *prasād* and puts *tikā* on forehead of every member. The samay prepared for this day is little different from the previous day's. Along with the similar items, it also includes fried meat, beans, and achhar. Also if the families want to add some sweets or anything else, they do it on this occasion. So it is often said that it is the best feast of the whole event. In the evening, snacks are served which is called as *Kwā sawā*. At last, feast is prepared again which is distributed amongst the family members and this time they take it away to their house. In most of the families, married daughters along with their families are invited and are served this feast. Even among Manandhars, there are different rules about the participation of the married daughters at the *digu pūjā* ceremony of their natal home. In some groups it is valid only for the following year after marriage, while in other groups especially among the Manandhars of Thahity, married daughters can participate until she becomes mother.⁹⁵ At last, the lineage god is taken back to the *thākulī*'s house and this ritual is called as *dyo tuyekegu*. It can be said that on this day all the *pūjā* rituals related to the lineage god are completed. But in some groups, this ritual of *dyo tuyekegu* takes place in the evening of the fourth day. During this entire period, lineage members avoid taking outer food or attending parties.

The fourth day is *Śrāddha*. Priest performs the *Śrāddha* in the name of the late ancestors of the lineage. Though *Śrāddha* is taken as purely Hindu ritual, there are certain features which mark the demarcation between the rituals of *Śrāddha* that are performed in a Hindu style. This time *Śrāddha* is performed by *thākulī* along with two other male members. Name of all deceased family members above 6/7 generations and whose second death anniversary has been completed are included in the list. In this list few names of the deceased kings are also included. In the evening, cooked rice is eaten after two days.

⁹⁵ Manandhar, f.n. 90, p.32-33.

The last day of *Mu digu pūjā* is *Bāyegu bhoye* i.e, parting feast. No *pūjā* or any other ritual either related to god or ancestors is performed on this day. The food restriction is lifted on this day but chicken and egg are still avoided. In the morning, *caku ja* is offered to all the members. This was later replaced by *khir* (rice pudding).⁹⁶ The main reason for this gathering is to calculate the expenditure of the whole event which was carried out only by the host. On this day host provides the list of the expenses and it is calculated on per person basis. If there is enough source of income in the *guthi*, families don't have to pay this amount but it is deducted from that. Otherwise each family pays the *lhapan* to the host. In the evening again, feast is prepared which either is consumed there or taken away to home. In this way five day affair of *digu pūjā* comes to an end.

Nya digu pūjā follows the *mu digu pūjā*. This one falls after fifteen days of the second day of *mu digu pūjā*. *Nya* is an abbreviated form of *nyayekegu* which literally means to celebrate. This shows it is an optional celebration but still Manandhar community seems to have continued this tradition as obligatory. *Nya digu pūjā* is observed only for a single day. Another notable feature of this *pūjā* is the place where it is conducted. It is the premises of the main temple of the lineage god. Every household used to contribute one food item for the feast, with the *thākulī* making a payment for goat. This practice showed harmony among the families and also it was not necessary to calculate the expenses. However it was realized that this was little inconvenient in that the sharing was not equal so, on this day also, the host made all the expenses which was later calculated and paid back to the host.

The food restriction is not followed on this day except for chicken and egg which are completely forbidden to take. As most of the sites are far from city area, the whole event is simply a kind of a family picnic.

⁹⁶ Interview with Tri Ratna Manandhar, on 2068-6-1

Pūjā starts first at the house of the *thākulī*, where the metal image of the lineage god is worshipped by the *thākulī* himself. On this occasion this metal image is not carried to the site in the chariot. Then with two *pūjā* sets in *kota*, *thākulī* leaves his house and first goes to the *kha* and offers *pūjā* to the stone image of the lineage gods present there. Then he reaches to the temple of the lineage god and the *pūjā* starts after all the members gather at the site. For this *digu pūjā* all the *pūjā* rituals are carried out by the *thākulī* himself. First, Ganesh is worshipped and *bali* of a goat is given to the god. Then lineage god is worshipped after which all other gods present around the area are worshipped. This process is called as *caka pūjā*.⁹⁷ On completion of all the *pūjā*, *thākulī* gives *prasād* to all the members. Then the environment becomes like a family picnic. All day through, different delicious items are prepared and consumed. In the evening the ritual of *sikabhu* is started. The only difference between this ritual during *mu digu pūjā* and now is that, this time all the *si* are distributed among the male lineage members as priest is not appointed this time. In this way a day long *nya digu pūjā* comes to an end.

Nachā digu pūjā is celebrated after four months of the *Mu digu pūjā*. This time also the auspicious date is similar with the second day of the *Mu digu pūjā* i.e, *khele wanegu* day. This *digu pūjā* is taken as complimentary *pūjā* to the main one. On completion of this *digu pūjā* ceremony for that year is completed. This *digu pūjā* falls on the tenth month of the Newar calendar. The main differences between *Nachā digu pūjā* and *Mu digu pūjā* are :

- This one is celebrated for two days only. There is no need to do the *choyelā bhu*, *Kolāgha* and *Bāyegu bho*.
- All the *pūjā* rituals are done on smaller scale. Instead of goat, only a duck is sacrificed.
- This time also, in most of the cases it is the *thākulī* who performs the *pūjā* as no priest is appointed for the same.

⁹⁷ Personal observation

- All the responsibilities are carried out by the host only i.e, *sulin* and *bhari pā* is not differentiated.

Apart from this, there are not many differences between *Mu digu pūjā* and *Nachā digu pūjā*. The *pūjā* rituals of the first day are almost similar to the second day celebration of the *mu digu pūjā*. At first, the metal image of the god in a chariot is carried by the lineage members to *khele*. The place is cleaned with *syucā* and *sakhwa chun*. Then the metal images of the lineage god are placed in front of the stone images of the god and are decorated with *kikimpā* and *moha ma*. *Driṣṭi* and *citlā* are placed to the stone image of the god and *ārwa* are placed in front of each stone image. There are no differences in the *pūjā* rituals either. At last, *thākulī* offers flowers to all the gods, and this is done in presence of all the lineage members. *Swan kwakayegu* is generally done by the *nakuli* (the second head of the family).⁹⁸ *Swa kwakayegu* means taking little flowers from the offerings to distribute as *prasād*. Certain portions of feast is offered to the god called as *dyo bo*. One of this is offered to the crow. This is called as *ko nan cipan thiyekegu*. Feast is started only when this offering is eaten by a crow. *Khay*, the main *prasād* is taken first in *sali* and then *samay* is served. After this, senior male members get involved in singing the *dāphā me*, songs which have words of praise for the lineage god, while other members prepare feast for the evening. It is up to the members whether to take the food home or eat it there. In most of the cases, feast is distributed which they take back to their houses. Feast is followed by *sikābhu*. Number of *si* is different in *Nachā digu pūjā* as the sacrificed animal is not goat. Five *si* are distributed to five senior male family members. *Thākulī* takes the head while second and third in row gets right and left wing respectively. Right and left legs are given to fourth and fifth senior members. The number of *si* is lesser in case of duck so if the number of *chutin* (households) is more than five, the remaining heads of the families get only duck's meat in the *sikabhu*.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Personal Observation

⁹⁹ Manandhar, f.n.90, p 40-41

After all the rituals are completed, the metal image gods are again placed back in the chariot and taken back to the host's house where *sagun* is given to the god. From there, it is again taken back to the *thākulī*'s place where it is always kept. And with this, finally all the rituals for that day is concluded.

The next day, *Śrāddha* in the name of late ancestors of the lineage is done. The ritual is carried out by the *thākulī*. All the members gather at the host's house and take the evening dinner together. A calculation of the expenses and the payment to the host is done in the day time as this day is the last day.

5.4.1.8 Ranjitkar

Another caste which holds equal rank with Manandhar in caste hierarchy is Ranjitkar. Mainly found around the areas of *kone twa*, *lākhe nani chuka* is the place where most of the ranjitkars have their ancestral house. These people believe themselves as the descendents of the god Manjushree.¹⁰⁰ Though the percentage of the people of this caste is not that much, there are many sub groups. The *temā khala* and *sankha nārāyan khala* are the two main groups. *Temā khala* is named on the basis of taking a little more salt while the people of the *sankha nārāyan khala* are engaged in little more respectable post especially in the palace and are educated ones. Even within these two main groups, there are many small sub-groups like- *dhun gala*- one who has tiger like face, *phai gala*- one who talks more, *guptak*- one who keeps secrets, *sukubhai*- one who is skinny.¹⁰¹

Of these groups and sub groups, *sankha narayan khala* celebrate their *digu pūjā* at Dhobichaur near the *bhudi Ganesh* temple. They used to celebrate *mu digu pūjā* for three/four days with bajracharya as priest. The first of the three day ceremony would start with *choyelā bhu*. On this day, they cleaned the house and took a bath. Usually a

¹⁰⁰ Bhairaja Ranjitkar "Ranjitkar Jati ya mhasika" (An Introduction to Ranjitkar Caste), *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu, N.S. 1127, p 326

¹⁰¹ Interview with Timila Ranjitkar, on 2067-3-1

nai (women from low caste) came to cut the toe nails and painted them with *ala* (red coloured powder used to colour the feet especially for auspicious occasion). From this day, food restriction would begin- garlic, tomato, onion, chicken, egg, etc. were the most common things that were excluded. These food items are called as *ameya*. In the evening, *choyelā bhu* ritual would be completed at the host's house.

Next morning, all the family members of the lineage would gather at the place where they would celebrate the *digu pūjā*. From each family, one *kota* with *pūjā* items were brought. Long back, it is said that both *yomari* and *catāmari* were necessary for the *pūjā* while later, only *catāmari* was offered to the lineage god. They share one anecdote about this. Daughter-in-law of this family died of the steam while making *yomari* so from then on they made offerings of *catāmari* only.¹⁰² The lineage god present at *khele* is the imageless stone which is decorated with *kikimpā* and other ornaments taken from the house. One of the unique features in the *kikimpā* is that the names of the late ancestors are engraved.¹⁰³ They also use *driṣṭi* and *citlā* to give vivacity to these stone representing lineage god. Priest, always *bajracharya*, is appointed but after they stopped giving *bali* of the animal, head of the lineage i.e, *thākulī* performs all *pūjā*. Like all other Buddha margi Newars *sonā pūjā* is compulsory at *digu pūjā*. Every *pūjā* ritual is followed under the tradition of vajrayana and so there is only little or no difference at all from those of the other groups.

The ritual of *dutenegu* is also an important feature of any *digu pūjā*. In this group, only sons and daughter-in-laws are ritually introduced to the lineage god on this day. From the natal home of daughter-in-law, *pūjā ku* is sent which includes dresses for the daughter, her husband and for in laws also. A goat for the purpose of *bali* is also sent along with sweets, curd etc.¹⁰⁴ After the function, daughter-in-law offers *salā pā* to each *chutni* couple. This *Salā Pā* contains little beaten rice, five small pieces of

¹⁰² Interview with Kunjarika Ranjitkar, on 2067-3-1

¹⁰³ Interview with Timila Ranjitkar, on 2067-3-1

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Kunjarika Ranjitkar, on 2067-3-1

choyelā, sweet, fruit and a coin. If *pūjā* is conducted by the priest then *tikā* and *prasād* is given by him otherwise all the members receive *tikā* and *prasād* from *thākulī*. *Thākulī* naki puts sindoor to all the female family members. In most other castes, *thākulī* naki uses her left hand to put the sindoor, but in this group, she does it with her right hand. It can be taken as a change in later years. If *bali* is offered then *sikabhu* is done in the evening. Eight parts of the head are distributed to seven senior male members and the priest. During the feast, all the members sit according to their age and even the unmarried daughters are placed with sons according to their age.

The third day is *Kolāgha*. This day, there are not much *pūjā* rituals. The day is specially used to celebrate with the married daughters. Married daughters along with their kids are invited. But nowadays, they invite the married daughters on the second day. In some groups, ritual of *Śrāddha* is observed on the fourth or the last day. Everything is organized by the host, from making arrangements for *pūjā* to feast. All the families help him as outer help is not taken while making the feast.

This group does not have tradition of celebrating *nya digu pūjā* while *Nachā digu pūjā* is also observed in a very simple manner. Families celebrate *Nachā digu pūjā* at home. And it is not necessary that this *Nachā digu pūjā* is celebrated on the same *tithi* as the *mu digu pūjā*. Most of the groups celebrate their *Nachā digu pūjā* during Indra jatra.¹⁰⁵ This is because the main area where the activities of this festival revolve is the area where major population of Ranjitkars lives. So during the Indrajatra festival, families invite their married daughters along with their children and celebrate, which they call as their *Nachā digu pūjā*. Lineage god is worshipped in the morning, usually from the roof of their house looking to the direction where their *khele* lies. Besides this, no other formal *pūjā* rituals are followed. Whole day is enjoyed by all the family members together by feasting. In this way, lineage god worship for that year is completed.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Kunjarika Ranjitkar, on 2067-3-1

The other castes which also rank similar with these castes in the caste hierarchy are Malakar, Chitrakar, Dali, Nakarmi and Tandukar. Most of the families which belong to this caste now do not observe or celebrate their *digu pūjā* in a similar way that it used to be long ago. People even do not remember how they used to celebrate this. Few groups have revived it and are celebrating it but with many modifications. They think modification is much needed for long run. Such groups are Mali and Chitrakar of Kirtipur.

5.4.1.9 Nakarmi

Certain Nakarmi groups have restarted to celebrate their *digu pūjā* some 35/40 years ago.¹⁰⁶ So even the senior members are unable to date when such practice was stopped and what the reasons for that were. Now they celebrate their *digu pūjā* once a year for a single day. Such practice was started after all the members felt that if they continue to celebrate their *digu pūjā* separately, then in future the clan members might be like strangers. There are altogether 17 households in this group with around 65-70 members. As everything was planned from the beginning, they celebrate it in most organized way. In case if any member is not able to participate, he does not have to pay for the feast. The total number of family members who will be able to join the event is calculated and also the amount that will be needed. Then the amount is handed over to the year's host and shopping is done. In shopping also, he is assisted by the *guthi* members so all the work is not put upon the host's shoulder. As far as the interviewer remembers, as was told to him by his grandparents, *jogi(kusle)* used to come and play the flute like *Muwālī* during this *digu pūjā*. *Nai* used to come a day before to cut the toe nails and paint them with *ala* which was a part of purification.¹⁰⁷ But nowadays it is not followed. As they celebrate their *digu pūjā* only for a single day the food restriction is also for that single day. Besides chicken and its egg, garlic, tomato, onion etc. are some specific items that are not consumed on that day. They go

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Chandra Man Nakarmi, 14 Aug 2010

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

the site which is at Bhajan ga at Kirtipur near Balkhu. There are two stones which they call as their lineage god. The metal image is taken from the *thākulī*'s house along with the *kikimpā* and other ornaments of the lineage god. Bajracharya priest is appointed who starts the *pūjā* with placing the metal image of the god and other accessories to proper places. Prior to that, the area is cleaned with *syucā* and *sakhwa chun*. Then *driṣṭi*, *citlā* are glued to the stone images of the god. *Sona pūjā* is carried out by the priest. This *pūjā* is similar to that of all other castes that perform such *pūjā* under bajracharya priest. *Mohni sinha* is most important in such *pūjā*. One *pūjā* set from each household is taken to the host house where all the *pūjā* items are reset in one *kota* and is taken to the *khele*. They do not give *bali* of an animal, rather egg is taken as substitute for animal sacrifice. As egg represents animal in this case, it is offered to Ganesha only and not to the main lineage god. It is considered as *hi ma pha dyo*, meaning that they don't accept the fresh blood offered through *bali*. Daughter-in-law married in that year along with all new born sons and daughters are entitled to perform the ritual of *dukāyegu*. It is compulsory to bring the *ku* from the natal home of daughter-in-law. This *ku* includes mainly the food items like *wo*, *choyelā*, *musyā*, *pālu* and some sweets. After the completion of the *pūjā*, *tikā* and *prasād* is given by the priest while the *thākulī naki*, wife of the head of the family, puts the *bhuyu sinha* to all the female family members regardless of their marital status and age. Among non Newars, unmarried girls do not wear *pote* and *sindoor*.

Before starting feast, *khay* is taken as *prasād*. This *khay* is taken as the main *prasād* and is made up of the items from *sona pūjā* i.e., *dhau*, *cikan*, *thon*, small pieces of *musyā*, *pālu* and *choyelā* and sometimes small pieces of the boiled egg given as *sagun* is also added.¹⁰⁸ This group doesn't have any taboo, like - first the crow or any other bird or animal should accept the food. So right after taking the *khay samay baji* is distributed. *Khyo bo*, *laxmi bo*, *pala bo* and *dyo bo* are first offered to respective gods. In the evening a simple *bhoye* is prepared. As no animal sacrifice is made, no separate

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Chandra Man Nakarmi, 14 Aug 2010

sikabhu is done. The egg which was offered in place of *bali* is cooked and distributed during evening bhoje. In this way the day's affair comes to an end. The metal images along with the *kikimpā* and other ornaments are taken back to the *thākulī*'s house. Married daughters are not entitled to participate, as such; they are invited in the evening in their houses.

5.4.1.10 Malakar

Among the Malakars most of the families have adopted a single family celebration while observing lineage god worship. Even 90 years old informant told that he barely remembers the joint celebration except once having heard in his childhood that even his mother was not ritually introduced because of the discontinuation. This means that in his lineage such practice has not been in use for more than 90 years.¹⁰⁹ Nowadays they celebrate their *digu pūjā* on the last day of the festive season i.e, on *sithī nakha* by every individual family. The *thākulī* in whose house the metal image of the lineage god is kept, first worships that metal image and then goes to the *khele* with the *pūjā* items in a *kala*. The sites where the stone images of lineage gods are placed in case of Malakars of Kathmandu are either at the premises of Bhadrakali, Paknajol etc. The Malakars of Kirtipur who used to celebrate their *digu pūjā* at Panga now have adopted a new place for the same celebration from 2057 B.S.¹¹⁰ Such trend is popular with Newar communities who can either switch the place as per own convenience. For this group, they now have settled the new site at *na gaun* at Kirtipur. Only four families out of many are still celebrating their *digu pūjā* together. Others go to the site with *pūjā kala* individually and worship the god. Other rituals including feast is completed at home. As far as they can remember, they celebrate their *digu pūjā* only for a single day and once in a year. Though there is a tradition of *choyelā bhu* the day before and *koyena wanegu* on the following day, these two are not considered as part of the main

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Prithi N. Mali, on 25th May 2010

¹¹⁰ Interview with Lila Mali, on 2067-3-5

digu *pūjā*.¹¹¹ The food restriction starts two days ahead. House is cleaned and for those days they don't even bring the restricted food items at home. Besides this day, just like certain Maharjan groups of Kirtipur, they also have that tradition of going to the temple of Jalavinayak at Chovar which they call as *Koyena wanegu*. It takes place the following day. This group celebrate their digu *pūjā* on Akshaya Tritiya. So on *caturthi* they go to the above mentioned site for Ganesha *pūjā* where there is no restriction on food items. Rather, they take garlic on this day and *bali* of chicken is given to the god, both of which are on the list of restricted food items for digu *pūjā*. When celebrated in full scale some decades back, this group also called *jogi* to play the *muwālī* and lead the procession to the place of worship. A single stone with three mandaps in the front represent the lineage god. The three mandaps represents the three eyes of Mahadev so their lineage god is Mahadev. As it takes the offering of the blood they call this as the Mahadev in form of Bhairava. Calling of the Bajracharya priest depends upon what they are offering as *bali*. It is compulsory to call the priest if the offering is of goat but in case of duck and egg, the head of the lineage performs the whole *pūjā*.¹¹² Only simple *pūjā* is done with no *sona pūjā* of either *thapi*, *kori* etc while *mohani sinha* which is also a part of *sona pūjā* is necessary. Decorations at the site are made with *dhwajā*, *patāka* etc. which might include *driṣṭi*, *citlā* depending upon the availability. *Chaumari* is necessary, while making yomari during this *pūjā* is not found among this group. Newlywed daughter- in- law along with new born son and daughter all are ritually introduced to the lineage god. First, daughter- in- law then according to their age i.e, senior first (irrespective of their sex) sons and daughters stand up in queue for this ritual. *pūjā ku* along with food items are send from the parental house of the daughter- in- law. It is not compulsory to send the food items but it varies among different groups. In most of the cases *pūjā* items along with *lakhāmari*, some sweets, fruits and especially curd is sent from the parental house of the daughter- in- law. These things are sent directly to the *Khele* and not to the

¹¹¹ Interview with Chandra B. Mali, on 2067-3-5

¹¹² Ibid

grooms's house. After completion of the *pūjā*, feast begins. But before that, either the priest or the head of the lineage puts the *tikā* on the forehead of all the members, while the *thākulī* naki puts the *bhuyu sinha* to all the female family members with her left hand. Newlywed daughter- in- law is then formally introduced to each member of the lineage by her mother in law, especially to the seniors where the seniors give flowers as *prasād* and she bows her head to them. Portion of feast is first offered to the main lineage god along with other gods as *dyo bo* and *khyo bo*. As they don't perform *sona pūjā* of *Khaye korin*, *thapi*, they don't take *Khaye* as main *prasād* in the beginning but during *sraddha* they do take *khay*, the ingredients of which are similar with other Newar castes.¹¹³ They don't offer the first portion of the feast to the crow during *digu pūjā* but during *sraddha*, one portion of the feast is left aside to the crow and is offered in the end. If crow eats something from that, it is believed that all the rituals have been completed in right way while unacceptance is taken as inauspicious.

Married daughters are not entitled to participate in such *pūjā* but in past days they were invited on the second day i.e., *koyena wanegu*. This day not only is meant for inviting the married daughters and celebrating with them, it also is taken as the day where they can calculate the expenditure of the yesterday's event and pay the dues to the host.

For those four families who still are practicing the combined worship, first gather at the host's house. Before couple of days, they would have had a small meeting for the celebration. They collect Rs. 500 per family and hand over the amount to the current year's host. Host is helped by members of other families while making arrangements for the *pūjā* and the feast. On that specific day, they first get prepared by taking bath in the morning. For that whole day they can't take boiled rice along with chicken, tomato, onion, garlic etc. They used to have the *kikimpā* and *mukut* of the lineage god which were stolen few years back. From then on they just go to the site with the *pūjā*

¹¹³ Interview with Lila Mali, on 2067-3-5

items in a *Kala*.¹¹⁴ Feast is prepared in the host's house and taken there at the site. All the family members gather at the site and the head of the lineage performs the *pūjā*. New members are introduced and at last *tikā* is taken from the *Thākulī*. All the expenses are not calculated again. If there was any shortcoming in the amount that was collected before, then the host for that year fulfills that.

5.4.1.11 Chitrakar

Among the Chitrakars of Kathmandu, very few families are still practicing the trend of worshipping the lineage god in a combined way. Others have already left the tradition and worship their lineage god individually either at the *khele* or even from the roof of the house looking at the direction of the *Khele*. In the past days, Chitrakars of Bhimsenthan used to go to Chabahil in Kathmandu where they had their lineage god. This one is the replica of the Chaitya from Vajrayogini, Sankhu.¹¹⁵ This group has one golden chaitya representing their lineage god which they used to carry on the day of *digu pūjā*. After it was misplaced (rather stolen) the combined celebration was halted.¹¹⁶ One of the groups of Chitrakar who worship the Mahadev of dumja as their lineage god has their stone image of the lineage god behind the Mahakal temple near Newroad gate.¹¹⁷ For couple of years, this group also has discontinued to worship the lineage god in a combined manner. Besides, when they used to celebrate in a combined way, they would celebrate it twice a year – *Mu digu pūjā* during Baisak, and *Nachā* during Aswin. The *khele wanegu day* and the *Nachā digu pūjā* are on the same tithi i.e, *pāru*.¹¹⁸

During *Mu digu pūjā*, the celebration lasts for four days. On the full moon day of *Baishak* in the evening *choyalā bhu* is done at the host's house. House is cleaned and it is made sure that the restricted food items are not remaining in the house. In the

¹¹⁴ Interview with Lila Mali, on 2067-3-5

¹¹⁵ Interview with Indra Bd.Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

¹¹⁶ Interview with Madan Chitrakar, on 22 Sep 2010

¹¹⁷ Interview with Bishnu Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

¹¹⁸ Interview with Indra Bd.Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

evening, Nai comes to cut the toe nails of the female members and paint them with *ala*, which is also a part of purifying oneself.

On the second day, all the family members gather at the *pūjā* site i.e., at the backyard of Mahakal temple. Bajracharya priest performs the *pūjā* while he is assisted by the head of the lineage and his wife i.e., *thākulī naki*. From the house of the *thākulī*, the metal image of the god which is made of silver polished with gold along with its accessories eg. *kikimpā*, *kṣtra*, *mukut* are carried by the lineage members in a chariot. For other *pūjā* items, a *gyapoo* is appointed to carry the things to the *pūjā* site. The Bajracharya priest performs the *sona pūjā* called as *siwā jwola pūjā* in which *thapi*, *korin*, *anti*, *sukundā*, and *makaca* to collect the mohni sinha is placed in front of the god in a mandap. Another necessary *pūjā* items include *caumari*, *bālchi mā*, seasonal flowers etc. but *yomari* is not needed. They opine and share the story of a chitrakar person who died while eating a *yomari* for the reason of not eating *yomari* thereafter. From then on, even on *dhanya purnimā* which is called as *yomari punhi* among Newars, they neither make *yomari* nor celebrate the day.¹¹⁹ As chitrakar they are involved in making *driṣṭi* and other paintings related with *pūjā* so they also put *driṣṭi* and *citlā* to give that liveliness to the lineage god. If they are offering *bali*, it is not offered to the main lineage god but to the kumari whose stone image lies in the same row as that of the lineage god. During the *pūjā*, ritual of introduction of newlywed daughter- in- law along with new born sons and daughters is done. In this group, such introduction is also necessary during the *āgama pūjā*. It is during dashain when such ritual is again followed in front of the *Āgama dyo*. *Āgama dyo* is a secret deity which among many Newar groups is worshipped by only the male members, not even allowing the female members to look at it. So in past days, the caste of the daughter- in- law really mattered and daughter- in- law from other castes not only from lower but higher castes also were not easily accepted. Such ritual is not found among other Newar castes. After completion of the *pūjā*, all the members receive *tikā* and *prasād*

¹¹⁹ Interview with Indra Bd. Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

from the priest while *thākulī* naki puts the *bhuyu sinha* from her left hand to all the female members of the lineage.

Khaye is prepared from the *sonāgu jwolan* which includes five small pieces of *choyelā*, curd mixed with water, *thon*, mustard oil and salt. First, it is taken as *prasād* and then preparations are made for samay. Certain portions are left aside for the god and the site called as *dya bo* and *khay bo* respectively along with a portion for the crow as well. It is placed in the open place and only after a crow eats something from that, samay is served.¹²⁰

Long back, married daughters along with their children were invited even at *khele*. But it became so difficult to manage all of them as the number kept rising and at one time the number of married daughters and their children exceeded the actual number of lineage members. So from that time, married daughters were invited only on the third day. If *bali* is offered to the lineage god, *Sika bhoye* is done in the evening. In case of a goat, eight specific portions of the sacrificed animal's head is distributed amongst the senior seven male members and the priest. After completion of every ritual, the procession back to home starts. In the midway, a small *pūjā* is carried out called as *lisa pūjā*. This *pūjā* is meant for the invisible elements which either have followed the lineage god. It is believed that this *pūjā* satisfies them and only the lineage god is carried back home.

Third day is known as *Kolāgha*. On this day, secret *pūjā* of lineage god is performed at home of either host's or of *thākulī*'s. Married daughters along with their kids are invited on this day. Besides making different dishes and enjoying with all the members, no other specific ritual is done on this day. The final fourth day is called as *Bāyegu bhoye* i.e, parting feast. On this day, special feast is prepared which includes all the ingredients excluding chicken and egg which are in the list of the restricted

¹²⁰ Interview with Indra Bd.Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

food items. All the expenses are made by the host, so no calculations are done about the expenditure.

During Aswin, *Nachā digu pūjā* is celebrated for a single day. The day is celebrated in the same manner as the second day of *Mu digu pūjā*. It is called as *bisarjan pūjā* as this one is the last *digu pūjā* for that year.¹²¹ While about *nya digu pūjā* it is quite optional and is observed between long intervals. If celebrated, all the members go to the main shrine of the lineage god at Dumja and celebrate the *nya digu pūjā* there.

5.4.1.12 Dali

The principle inhabitants of Halchowk Dali or Rajbahak in their words don't have a tradition of observing the lineage god worship in a grand way like any other Newar family. As the settlement area is far from the city area, the major rituals are somewhat different from other Newars of the proper Kathmandu. The main reason behind this according to them is the place which in past years was totally cut off from the city area, people were not that much literate as they got engaged into work in very early years. They even say that the word Dali is derived from the word dalit (untouchable) which the local khas Brahmins used to call them because of their poor economic status.¹²² Originally, they are Rajbahak or the royal carriers who used to carry the doli (nw. *duli*) of the royals. Even the caste Putuwar is a later addition some 50 years back.¹²³

Bhairava of Halchowk is the one which they regard as their lineage god. These people don't have any open place *khele* where they celebrate their *digu pūjā*, even if they gather for some *pūjā* it is only in the premises of the temple of the Bhairava at Halchowk. They don't have any *digu pūjā* guthi, but some 20/22 families constitute one guthi and the *pūjā* related to this guthi is celebrated on the full moon day of

¹²¹ Interview with Indra Bd.Chitrakar, on 2067-6-22

¹²² Interview with Shankha Bir Putuwar, on 2067-6-2

¹²³ Interview with Chandra Putuwar, on 2067-6-2

Paush. Newlywed daughter- in- law and new born babies are introduced in this guthi to give the full membership in their caste/guthi. Certain amount of rice along with some *dakshina* is offered and they are ritually introduced to the guthi. Now, the present generation celebrate their *digu pūjā* on the last day of the *digu pūjā* season i.e, *Sithī nakha*. They don't even call this as *digu pūjā* but as the *pūjā* is performed on this day, we can somehow relate it with *digu pūjā*. *pūjā* is carried out by the head of the family and not by the priest. They don't have any metal image of the god or its accessory eg, *kikimpā*, *mukut*, *mala* etc. Nothing special for this *pūjā* is needed but *wo* made from black pulse is necessary. There is no restriction on the food items to be consumed. Chicken is offered as *bali* to the main god and *si kā bhu* is done according to their own ritual.

5.4.1.13 Shahi/Khadgi

The lineage god worship site or *khele* for Shahis of Kathmandu includes the present Nepal electricity office and the petrol pump opposite to this at Ratnapark. Along with this, Dhobichaur (*yampi khya* in Newari), Bhurungkhel, Pachali near Bhairava temple are some other sites where people of this caste celebrate their *digu pūjā*.¹²⁴ In most of the families, the tradition of combined worship is almost a tale like event, as it has been more than 50 years that these people are celebrating their *digu pūjā* individually.

When celebrated with all the families in a single lineage, there was some specific day decided on the basis of lunar calendar while some groups choose to celebrate it on either Thursday of the *digu pūjā* season.¹²⁵ But now, in most of the families, it is the last day of the *digu pūjā* season i.e, *Sithī nakha* when they celebrate their *digu pūjā* in a private manner. In the *khele*, there is a row of stone representing their lineage god. These stones are imageless except in some cases the first one has an image of

¹²⁴ Interview with Dilip Shahi, on 2067-5-30

¹²⁵ Interview with Anada Bd. Khadgi, on 2067-6-24

Ganesha.¹²⁶ Most of the Khadgis of Kathmandu worship Talegu Bhawani as their lineage god while Mhepi ajima is taken as lineage god by the Khadgis of Ason and kanga ajima by Khadgis of Maru dhoka or Chasan.

Even when celebrated together, *digu pūjā* ceremony for Khadgis is only a single day affair. There is no provision of *choyelā bhu*. The day at *khele* is the only day for the celebration. There is no any hard rule for the restriction on taking certain food items but chicken is not allowed in the feast. All the members gather at the host's house in the morning and from there, the metal image of the god along with its accessories eg, *kikimpā*, *mukut* etc are carried by the male lineage members in a chariot. In some cases, the procession is even led by the jogi playing *muwālī*. The stone gods at *khele* are cleaned and the god carried from the house is placed in front of these stone gods. *Driṣṭi*, *citlā* are stuck to the gods to give that liveliness.

Though in other occasions a priest called as *naye gubhaju* is called, during *digu pūjā*, all the *pūjā* is carried out by the *thākulī* himself. *pūjā* rituals are based on the Bajrayana tradition. Ritual to introduce the newlywed daughter- in- law is observed on this day. Up to recent past, daughter- in- law from castes above Jyapu is only accepted. For new born babies in the lineage, such ritual is not compulsory as they already become members by birth. But in some cases, a *kislīn* in the name of the new born son or daughter is offered to the lineage god.¹²⁷ Daughters after their marriage are not allowed to participate in the *pūjā*. Usually a goat is offered as *bali* to Ganesha but now duck's egg is taken as a substitute for that. In case of *bali* of a goat, *si ka bhu* is done in the evening. Some groups have a rule to offer one portion of the feast to the crow and wait for a crow to eat something from that. *Khaye* is taken first followed by *samay* and main *bhoye* or main feast. Every year, one family gets its turn to organize the event. Most of the groups don't have any asset related to this guthi, so after completion of *digu pūjā*, they calculate the expenditure and all the families pay the

¹²⁶ Interview with Dilip Shahi, on 2067-5-30

¹²⁷ Interview with Ananda bd. Khadgi, on 2067-6-24

amount to the host family. *Śrāddha* in the name of the late ancestor during *digu pūjā* is not found among Khadgis but there are some other guthis in which a combined *Śrāddha* is performed by certain families related with that guthi.

5.4.2 Shiva Margi Newars

5.4.2.1 Rajopadhyaya

Rajopadhyayas are the priest for Shiva Margi Newars. Although they perform as a priest in every religious ceremony at Shiva Margi Newar families, they have no role at the worship of the lineage god. Even among them Digu *pūjā* is important but is a close family matter. Among Rajopadhyas, the ‘*Wanga chhe*’ clan celebrates its *digu pūjā* at the backside of Ichhangu temples (Plate: 21) whereas ‘*Makhan chhe*’ celebrates it at Dhumbarahi.¹²⁸ The ‘*Āgama chhe*’ or the places where ‘*Āgama devatā*’ is placed and worshipped is near the locality where they live. These two groups have different ‘*Āgama chee*’ and this ‘*Āgama devatā*’ is worshipped only by the members of its clan. Any member from another group can neither enter the site nor can perform any *pūjā* to the god.

Even the Karmacharya priest who performs the *homa* (sacred fire ritual) does it outside the main room where *Āgama devatā* is placed.

Rajopadhyayas celebrate their *digu pūjā* only once a year which lasts for a single day. *Pūjā* is done by the head of the lineage, generally called as *Thākuli*. Though the *pūjā* rituals are simple, the position of the lineage god among Rajopadhyas is not less. They also go through the food restriction for that single day. Tomato, garlic, onion are some such items which are not eaten as these food items are regarded as impure. Whole family, excluding the married daughters, participates in the ceremony.

¹²⁸ Interview with Baldev Juju, on 2066-11-28

Everyone gathers at the place where the stone image of lineage god is situated. The entire *pūjā* offering are made by the *thākulī* with the help of other male members of the family. *Bali* is offered to the Bhairava lastly after offering to all other gods. Groups which have Maheswori as their lineage god cover the god while offering *Bali* to all other gods.¹²⁹

After *Bali*, it is compulsory to perform the ritual of *Sikābhu*. *Sika bhu* is the ritual in which the eight parts of the sacrificed animal's head (i.e. if the animal sacrificed is goat, if it is any other, the number of parts varies) is taken as *Si*. *Si* is given only to the male members of the lineage. Ritual of *dutenegu* is also compulsory. The newlywed daughter-in-law is introduced formally to the lineage member on this day. New born sons are also ritually introduced. The process of *dutenegu* is similar to that of Bajracharyas. The senior female members take part in this ritual. Common feast is organised at last and a day-long family affair comes to an end.

5.4.2.2 Joshi (Maru Joshi)

Another Shiva margi caste that is ranked in a higher class like Shrestha but have some priestly job during death rituals are *Joshi*. Popularly known as astrologers, a group of this caste observes their *digu pūjā* in a very unique way. Joshis of Maru (a place in central Kathmandu) near Kathmandu Durbar square who have around 76 households in the *pūjā* group celebrate their *digu pūjā* only when male member in their lineage gets married. There is no need to follow specific date. The occasion might fall twice in a same year or no *digu pūjā* for couple of years also.¹³⁰

When asked about from when such a unique system was adopted, the members replied it has been the same as far as they can remember. In any Newar society, regardless of the religion they follow, the trend to formally introduce the newlywed daughter-in-law to the lineage member is a must. Unless it is done, the daughter-in-

¹²⁹ Interview with Baldev juju, on 2066-11-28

¹³⁰ Interview with Bijay Dhoj Joshi, on 2067-3-28

law does not get full status in any family matter. In this case, even if she dies, the lineage members are not obliged to follow her death pollution. So, the trend to celebrate the worship of lineage god might have started with the intention of formally introducing newlywed daughter-in-law immediately after the marriage.

After the marriage of a son, the family organizes everything for the event. Every lineage members are invited. *Byāli Śrāddha*, though not related to the *digu pūjā*, is compulsory before marriage of either son or daughter. After this *Śrāddha*, a marriage is rarely postponed.

The site for their *digu pūjā* is *Matuli* near *Pachali* at *Teku*. This place is known as *Machali* these days. Everyone gathers at the site just the day after the marriage.

These Joshis have Rajopadhyays as their priest but for this occasion of *digu pūjā*, the senior most male member i.e, *thākulī* performs the *pūjā*. If the *thākulī* is not ordained, then the second in row acts as *thākulī* and performs the *pūjā*. The interesting aspect is, if the second in row performs the *pūjā*, he is also entitled to get the *right eye* share in *Sikabhu* which generally is given to the *thākulī*.¹³¹

The lineage gods are imageless stone gods. After cleaning the area, *Driṣṭi* and *citlā* are stuck to the stone image so as to give them liveliness.

After this, *Sonā pūjā* is started. Upon the completion of *Sonā pūjā*, everyone receives *tikā* from *thākulī*. The *thākulī*'s wife, *thākulī naki* puts *Sindur* to all the female members, even to unmarried daughters as well.

Newlywed daughter-in-law along with their spouse is then taken inside with the ritual of *dutenegu*. The process of *dutenegu* is almost similar as in Newar Buddhist families, where the senior female members take part in the process. Not only son along with his

¹³¹ Interview with Bijay Dhoj Joshi, on 2067-3-28

wife but the daughters whose *Ihi* is completed are also formally introduced to the lineage god. The newlywed couple performs *pūjā* in front of the lineage god.¹³²

Pūjā items along with one black goat are sent from the natal home of daughter-in-law. This *pūjā ku* also includes one *kikimpā* made up of silver. *Kikimpā* is a kind of ornament especially made for lineage god. The *kikimpā* brought from natal home of the daughter-in-law is kept in the *Āgama chhe* after *pūjā*. Similar kind of *kikimpā* is offered to the lineage god from groom's side also. But this one, family can take back as the blessing of the god and keep that at home. Then the animals are sacrificed. One from groom's side and one from natal home of daughter-in-law is sacrificed. Two black he-goats are prepared and *pūjā* of these goats are done in front of lineage god. Then it is taken out and is sacrificed in front of Bhairava, the statue of which is situated in the outer premises.

Completion of all these *pūjā* rituals is followed by common feast. At first, specific portion of each food item is placed aside for the lineage god. After that, the family members sit according to their seniority order and enjoy the feast. Though married daughters along with their family and members from the natal home of daughter-in-law are invited to the feast, they are not allowed to sit in this row. They are served later. At first, this feast is meant only for the core family members.

As animal is sacrificed, '*si kā bhoje*' is a must. '*Si*' is given only to the male family members according to their seniority order. Another unique feature about this group is, though, only male member are entitled to get '*si*', the newlywed daughter-in-law and her husband also get '*Si*' regardless of their age or sex. Both of them are given 'tongue'.¹³³ After taking '*si*', everyone who gets their share of '*si*' wash hands in the very place where they are sitting.

¹³² Interview with Bijay Dhoj Joshi, on 2067-3-28

¹³³ Interview with Bijay Dhoj Joshi, on 2067-3-28

The food restriction is followed throughout the day. There is no need to transfer the responsibilities to host the event as host family is already decided by the marriage of a son. They don't have any source of income for this '*digu pūjā guthi*'. As one single family hosts the entire event, the cost for the feast doesn't matter. They don't know from when such trend started but nonetheless, the families are still carrying out similar tradition in the present day.

5.4.2.3 Shrestha

Shrestha is a collective term for more than 64 castes in a Newar society. These people regard themselves as Shiva Margi and celebrate their *digu pūjā* once a year only. In almost all cases, this *pūjā* is completed in a single day. Most of the castes which come under this broad category of Shrestha do not have the tradition of going to an open place *Khele*. They celebrate their *digu pūjā* at the premises of the temple of their lineage god.¹³⁴ So they don't have to arrange the *pūjā* items of *Driṣṭi*, *Citlā* and *ārṇwā* used to decorate the imageless stones worshipped as lineage god in other castes. *pūjā* rituals are almost similar but are carried out by the *Thākulī* (senior male family member) and not the priest. Among Shresthas nowadays, it is not important whether the *Thākulī* is ordained or not but it used to be so in the past. While performing *pūjā* of *Āgama dyo*, *decca(dikshya)* is a must.¹³⁵ Though female members can also take *decca*, it is prohibited to widows.

One of the important aspects of this *pūjā* ceremony is the ritual of a formal entrance of the daughter-in-law. In most of the cases this ritual of *Dutenegu* is done only for daughter-in-laws. If a son is born, *Kislin* is offered as a part of a formal introduction, while nothing is done in case of a daughter. From the natal home of daughter-in-law, a *pūjā ku* is sent. The items included in this *pūjā ku* varies from simple *pūjā* items including a goat to a lavish kit containing dress materials for the daughter, son-in-law

¹³⁴ Interview with Satya Mohan Joshi, on 2066-11-28

¹³⁵ Ibid

and his parents as well.¹³⁶ As such, these days, this *kit* is accentuated as a matter of pride by the groom's family to show how wealthy their daughter-in-law is. Such *pūjā ku* is essential only when *dewālīpūjā* is celebrated. In *Kṣma pūjā* which is considered as a substitute *pūjā* for the *dewālīpūjā* and is completed in a simple rite, such *pūjā ku* is not necessary.

Another major function of this *dewālī* group is to determine the acceptance of a daughter-in-law; especially when the daughter-in-law is from castes other than Shrestha. Though people like to use the term liberal in such cases, there is not a single example in which a daughter-in-law from water unacceptable Newar caste is ritually introduced to such *guthi*. But there are plenty of cases in which a foreigner is accepted by such *guthis*.

As this *pūjā* ritual involves animal sacrifice, *Sikābhu* is done and this is quite similar to other Newar groups. Mostly a goat is sacrificed to the lineage god. As in most cases, these people have female deities as their lineage gods, which are termed as *Hipha dyo* (one who accepts fresh blood as part of animal sacrifice) so the blood is directly offered to the lineage god.¹³⁷ There is no need to offer the blood to either Ganesha or Bhairava which is a common practice among the groups which have *Hi Maphya dyo* (one who doesn't accept the fresh blood) as their lineage god. Eight parts of the head are taken as *Si* by the eight senior male members of the lineage. As every *pūjā* ritual is carried by the *Thākulī* and a priest is not involved at any level here also, *Si* is distributed among its lineage members.

Shresthas who have migrated from Kathmandu long back and settled in different parts of the country still celebrate their *kula pūjā* but in private manner. Shresthas in Palpa celebrate their *kula pūjā* on the last day of the festive season i.e., *sithi nakha*. Each family celebrates it individually at home and not in the shrine of any god. Though it is compulsory for every family member to attend the function nowadays it is performed

¹³⁶ Interview with Saphalya Amatya, on 2067-11-27

¹³⁷ Interview with Kashi Nath Tamot, on 2066-12-3

only with members present at that time. This implies the decreasing interest among the young generation towards this ritual. As it is difficult to continue any ritual in a new place after migration the people there appoint either Brahmin priest or Bajracharya Gubhaju as per their convenience or availability regardless the religion they follow or their tradition. Most of the families are migrated from Bhaktapur area and according to their tradition some families do allow their married daughters to participate in the annual *kula pūjā* ceremony while some do not allow them to participate in the same function after marriage.

5.4.2.4 Karranjit

It is not clear where the Karranjits of Kathmandu stands in this caste hierarchy, but in their words they stood equally with the Rajopadhyay Brahmins. Even the old people of this caste recollect that some 60/70 years back when they used to bow their heads to Rajopadhyay priests, they would say that we both belong to same status and refer these people as Maha Brahmins.¹³⁸ Karranjits follow Saiva religion and were considered the only caste who can or who are eligible to make Shiva lingas during *pūjā*. The descendants of Malla rulers call these people to make shiva linga in case of any death in the family. They had that tradition of making shiva linga up to the 11th day and this work is specifically done by the Karranjits.¹³⁹ Actually, the population of this caste is relatively low when compared to other castes. The present generation doesn't remember the exact way in which their forefathers used to observe/celebrate their *digu pūjā*. The trend of celebrating it with all the lineage members together is a tale like episode for them. Even 65/70 year old informant doesn't have any idea about that as from his childhood what he remembers is going to the site of the lineage god only with his single family. These people don't have the *kawo* or group divided on the basis of the lineage groups. In case of other castes, members belonging to the same lineage group cannot inter marry; however, this does not apply to Karranjits. But here

¹³⁸ Interview with Surya Man Karranjit, on 2067-7-7

¹³⁹ Interview with Padam Karranjit, on 2067-7-7

such is decided on the basis of the groups which have similar *āgama dyo*.¹⁴⁰ The members of *kawo* whose *āgama dyo* is similar do not marry with the members of the same group. *Digu pūjā* is observed on the last of the worshipping season i.e, on Sithi nakha just for that single day. The open place or *khele*, where the stone representing the lineage god for all the Karranjits of Kathmandu, is at Tankeshwor. These people go to this site individually on the morning of the mentioned day with *pūjā* items in a *Kala* and do their offerings. The families which have the golden yantra representing the lineage god also carry the same to the site. Totally vegetarian offerings are made to the god.¹⁴¹ It is said that being the Maha Brahmins they were totally vegetarians which in due course of time was not properly followed in daily life. *Bali* in any form is not offered to the lineage god. Even in place of *thon* the home made liquor which is specially offered to the god in other Newar castes is not used here. Cow's milk is used in place of that.¹⁴² Although Karmacharya is appointed as priest in any religious function beside *Śrāddha* in which a Rajopadhyay Brahmin is called, the lineage god *pūjā* is carried out by the head of the family. The *pūjā* rituals are really simple in case of *digu pūjā*. Common feast is not organized at the *khele*, all the members return after the completion of the *pūjā*. One portion of the feast is offered to the lineage god while another one is offered to the crow. It's only after a crow eats something from that offered portion, that the members can eat something.

The ritual of *dukāyegu* i.e, the formal introduction to the lineage members is the most important part of this *pūjā*. Daughter-in-law, new born sons and daughters are ritually introduced. The paternal house of the daughter- in- law sends the *pūjā ku* and other items such as sweets, curd and food. It is not compulsory to send such *pūjā ku*. *Sala pa* used during *Ihi* is offered by the girl whose *ihi* has been performed during that year

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Hari Bahadur Karranjit, on 2067-7-7

¹⁴¹ Mangala Karranjit “Karranjit”, *Newa Samaj*, Kathmandu: Newa Dey Dabu, N.S. 1127 p.48

¹⁴² Interview with Hari bahadur Karranjit, on 2067-7-7

and in case of son whose Bratabanda is completed, offers *Kislin*.¹⁴³ *Ihi* and Bratabanda are considered as complete only after such offerings.

Like in any other Newar castes, the trend of using *Sukundā* is also found in this caste. *Sukundā* can be taken as a combination of *Dīp*, *Kalash* and *Ganesha*, and is always worshipped in any *pūjā* mainly by non-Newar castes. But in case of secret *āgama pūjā*, these people make *Dīp*, *Kalash* and *Ganesha* along with *Sukundā*. The *pūjā* rituals are totally based on the Vedic style.¹⁴⁴ If the male members of the Karranjit family take *decca*, they wear the sacred thread ‘*Janai*’ which also is consistent with the Vedic style.

5.4.2.5 Rajak

The Rajaks of Kathmandu worship Kamaladi Ganesh as their main deity. But most of them do not have any *guthi* as *digu pūjā guthi* and they do not celebrate their *digu pūjā* except for the five families in Lainchour.¹⁴⁵ These five families are still celebrating their *digu pūjā*, which they call as *dewālipūjā* as this group is much influenced by the non-Newar groups. Although Rajak are also classified as Newar, they do share a lot of similarities with non-Newars. *Buff*, which is one of the main food items in any Newar cuisine, is completely prohibited among Rajaks. In such situation, trend of *digu pūjā* or *dewālipūjā* was started in this group when great-great-grandfather of present *thākulī* married a Newari woman. Some of the *kikimpā* of the lineage god is 90 years old as the date is engraved in that. It is believed that *dewālipūjā* celebration started some 150 years ago in this group.¹⁴⁶

Dewālipūjā is a single day celebration and the day is decided by the senior male members. Any Saturday during *digu pūjā* season in the month of *Baishak*-*Jestha* is chosen. If it is not possible by some reason, then on the last day of the *digu pūjā*

¹⁴³ Interview with Hari bahadur Karranjit, on 2067-7-7

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Gyani Bahadur Karranjit, on 2067-7-7

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Krishna Rajak, on 2067-6-10

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Chunu Rajak, on 2067-6-10

season i.e, on *Sithī nakha*, *dewālipūjā* is celebrated. On a rotation basis, every family gets its turn to host the event. However, all the burden is not put on the host only. A week or 10 days ahead of the event, a meeting is called where male members of the family pre-calculate the estimated budget. All the members pay the amount to the host but shopping is done together. A day before the main day, four unmarried boys of the lineage cleans the chariot and the metal image of the lineage god. Long back, they used to go to Sallaghari where their stone gods are situated. The area is now covered by the Saraswati Campus and they have stopped going there for the last few decades.¹⁴⁷ Now they celebrate their digu *pūjā* at the premises of any other temple. For the last few years, they have been doing it at the premises of Mhepi. The temple chosen has nothing to do with their celebration. It is just for the matter of the available free space. On the very day, the chariot from the *pūjā* ghar of the lineage god is carried by the four unmarried boys. These are the same persons who cleaned the chariot a day before. Once carried from the *pūjā* ghar, they can only stop it after reaching at the proper place i.e, *pūjā* site. All the *pūjā* is carried out by the *thākulī* as no priest is appointed for the same. Women also do not have any role in the *pūjā*. As only the metal image is worshipped, *driṣṭi* and *citlā* are not needed. *Caumari* and *yomari* is also missing from required list while *tya ma* is a must in the *pūjā* list.

For the formal introduction of the daughter- in- law and new born babies, a certain amount of *dakshina* is required. They have fixed the amount as for a daughter Rs.50/-, for a son Rs. 100/- and more than Rs.100 for daughter- in- law.¹⁴⁸ Apart from this, people can add more. This entire amount is added to the account in the name of the lineage god which is used in the maintenance of the *pūjā* ghar and other necessary work related with the lineage god.

Bali of a goat is offered to the main god. The *si ka bhu* is little different as the unmarried boys also get their *si* regardless of their age. There will be altogether ten *si*.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Chunu Rajak, on 2067-6-10

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Krishna Rajak, on 2067-6-10

Right eye, left eye, right ear, left ear, mouth and tongue, these six *si* are distributed among six senior male members of the lineage. Other four *si* are upper left jaw, lower left jaw, upper right jaw and lower right jaw. These four *si* are distributed to the carriers of the chariot i.e, the unmarried boys of the lineage.¹⁴⁹ After completion of the *pūjā*, in five small earthen bowl, *ailā* (home made Newari wine) is taken and it is given to five male head members, one from each family. It is handed to them by *thākulī naki*. Once again, a little *ailā* is added to it. Then all the members take snacks brought from their house which includes tea, *mālpuwā*, *ālu tarkāri* etc. Feast is prepared there, and once it is ready, certain portions are left aside for the god, *pūjā* site, in the name of late ancestors, and to the temple where they are celebrating their event. This group does not have that tradition of offering the first portion to the crow. All the members enjoy the feast and if any one is absent, the family gets the share of the absentees also, as payment of all the members has already been made. During the feast, much attention is given to those four unmarried boys. Married daughters can not join the family members to the event once they get married. They are invited by the family and all day long, stay at home. In the evening, the remaining feast which is divided among five families, is brought at home and is served to them. *Prasād* is also distributed to the families of the daughter and parents of daughter- in- law. While returning from the *pūjā* site, male members sing and dance and enjoy. The senior members would sing Newari songs which probably have the words of praise for the lineage god. However, the present generation do not have any idea about those songs. They can sing anything, from movie numbers to pop songs. The only thing is that they do enjoy a lot while coming back from the *pūjā* site. At *pūjā* ghar, lineage god is taken inside with the ritual of *lasakusa* by the *thākulī naki*. In this way, *dewālipūjā* concludes.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Chunu Rajak, on 2067-6-10

CHAPTER VI

Changing Pattern in the Rituals

Change is necessary in every field. Everything around us keeps on changing and it is important to change ourselves to get along with time. So there have been lots of changes that have occurred in the rituals of *digu pūjā* in span of couple of decades. There are many reasons which have forced people to alter the rituals they perform out of which more liberal thoughts specially of the younger generation, busy life schedule, economic problems are some of the main causes that have inspired to change some or many rituals performed during this *pūjā* of the lineage god.

6.1 Necessary Puja Materials

Newar society during the medieval period was based on the caste system according to their profession. People of each caste were engaged in their family profession, no one did the job outside their caste and also the earnings were enough for them to sustain. As time passed on specially after the democratic movement of 1951 much importance was given in the field of education. First only male child was given proper education but later female child were also educated. Educated one slowly disliked the family profession and also it was becoming difficult to sustain from the family business only. People started working in government and private sector or started other business which seemed to be profitable leaving behind their own family business. Also after the introduction of democracy in the country resulted in the formation of groups specially of the lower and formerly untouchable caste. Such self formed organizations issued notice to their people not to participate in any rituals which would portray them as untouchable or belonging to lower caste in any form. ¹

¹ Nau from lower but clean caste and Nai from lower caste who used to come to cut the toe nails as part of purification rituals have stopped doing the same, also the Jugi who played the special flute “muyali” and lead the procession to the *pūjā* site have stopped doing the same for the past 3/4 decades.

The first reason resulted in scarcity of necessary materials in the *pūjā* rituals of *digu pūjā*. The family profession of Chitrakars is to make paintings. These paintings include some items that are necessary in the *pūjā* rituals eg. *citlā*, *driṣṭi* (figure of eye made in paper used specially during Dashain), tantric mandals etc. As people started doing different jobs leaving their family profession the production of such materials was also low. For this, these people are not the sole persons to be blamed, the consumption of materials that they produced were high only during the festive season. Once the festive season was over they had nothing to do which forced them to search for alternatives at first but completely abandoning family profession eventually. Not only *citlā* or *driṣṭi* there are lots of other necessary items which the present generation can't even spell the name correctly. People have to pay lot more than actual price for these items and also there are only few shops remained in Kathmandu which sell the *pūjā* items. The impact of this was slowly people started to perform *pūjā* without these *pūjā* items. But in most of the families where either priest is strict or there are many members above 60/65 years old, such *pūjā* items are still in use, no matter they have to pay more than actual price.

After the abolition of caste system, involvement of people from lower caste in other upper caste's *dewāli pūjā* was minimized. In some caste they even have some fixed asset which is used to give the annual fee to both these people. Nau/Nai used to cut the nails and put a special red paint *ala* in the feet of female members a day before the main *pūjā* as a part of purification. In the caste hierarchy up to Maharjan caste it's Nau who do this and below that Nai used to perform this purification ritual. Not only during *dewāli pūjā* but at other occasions also they have to come and perform this act. Just as priest, specific person is appointed by each family and it was compulsory for them to come and do their job. But for the past few decades it is very rare to find such examples.

Jogi previously regarded as untouchable caste play *Muyali* and leads the procession to the *pūjā* site. Throughout the day they stay at the *pūjā* site but just outside the

boundary area of the *pūjā* site. They also get feast and money for the same. But this trend was also stopped. Nowadays it is said that if someone participates in some functions as *Jogi* then they are charged and even expelled from their community by their concerned organizations.

The Maharjans who used to carry the necessary *pūjā* materials to the *pūjā* site have stopped doing the same in recent days. Maharjans are considered as pure to carry the *pūjā* materials so almost all *Newar* people call them during *dewāli pūjā* to carry the *pūjā* materials to the *pūjā* site. It is difficult to find any person belonging to this caste to carry the *pūjā* materials, so people carry the *pūjā* materials themselves to the *pūjā* site.²

6.2 Busy life

Business was the main profession of the *Newars* and they usually had shops or were engaged in their own family profession. The percentage of people working in government sectors was very low. This gave them freedom to celebrate their festivities with ease. But the scenario has changed in the last few decades. People are more engaged in government or private sector offices where they don't get much leisure time. Even if involved in business it is very hard to close the shop for a longer period in this competitive market. Also the kids who enjoy the most are busy with their school and studies and to get leave for 4/5 days just for the celebration is impossible. The long duration of *pūjā* became obstacle in continuing this *pūjā*. As time passed on changes were adopted. One of the changes was cutting off the duration of the *pūjā* period. Though not accepted whole heartedly by the old generation it has become trend in recent days to cut off the long duration of *pūjā* period to 1 or 2 day celebration so all the family members could take part in this celebration.

² After the enactment of land rights these people who normally worked for the land owner as tenants became the owner of the land they once cultivated and with the process of urbanization the price of the land specially in Kathmandu increased too much. So the interest of the people to take part in *digu pūjā* as carriers of *pūjā* items for other families slowly decreased and at present these people have completely stopped to carry the *pūjā* materials in their traditional carrier called "*khamhu*"

6.3 Approach of Younger Generation

Here in this case younger generation refers to the age group belonging to the age less than 25. This generation is educated and is quite liberal and open in religious matters. Different technologies like television, phone and most recent internet have changed the perception of these people towards religion and matters related with it. But this doesn't mean they don't respect their culture and rituals. Only difference is they are open for any change in the rituals. This generation no longer believes that everything is controlled by the god and if we do changes in the rituals god will punish us. For them to arrange *pūjā* materials even by paying lot more than actual price is waste of money. In their opinion alternatives should be sought and replace the existing one. While doing so one should be fearless and concentrate over the positive point that the ritual got its continuation. Because for them this *pūjā* and feast are held to strengthen the solidarity among the family members of the same lineage and some alteration in the *pūjā* rituals will not affect the main theme behind it.³

Not only alteration in the *pūjā* rituals but the time period also matters. Most of them are engaged in official jobs where it is difficult to get leave for a longer period. So they think a single day celebration should be best solution for this. Besides, the main debate among the young and the old generation is the inter caste marriage. In a *Newar* society when a person gets married to anyone even a *Newar* but other than own caste it is labeled as inter caste. In such cases of inter caste marriage the acceptance of daughter in law is decided by the members of *Digu pūjā guthi*. This acceptance also marks her entry to every other *guthis* in her husband's family so it is really important to get accepted by this *Digu pūjā guthi*. Though there have been changes in this issue in the last 20/25 years, still while accepting the daughter in law her caste is closely monitored. Muluki Ein of 1963 has abolished the inequality in the caste by giving equal protection of law to its entire citizen in the country but this concept of higher and lower caste is still found in the mind of people and specially among *Newars*. If

³ This information I got from many people of younger generation whom I interviewed.

the daughter in law belongs to higher caste than own then only she is accepted, otherwise inter religious marriages and untouchable *Newars* are not accepted in almost all the cases. Not only daughter in law in such cases even the son loses his membership in the *guthi*. As inter caste marriage is gaining popularity among the young generation such rules makes it difficult for them to give continuity to the rituals. Rather they opt to stay out form all such rituals which create barrier to marry the one they loved. One of the outcomes of such cases is that in many *guthis* it's only the old generation people who participate in the *pūjā* rituals. Also there are plenty of examples in which families have completely stopped performing this *pūjā* just because of the problem caused by inter caste marriage as there used to be endless debates about the acceptance of daughter in law from other caste. Even if a son is allowed to participate without accepting the daughter in law he also stays out of it. But still the old aged members are not ready to make compromise in such cases.⁴

6.4 Economic Status

In a *Newar* society when any *guthi* was formed asset in form of land was kept for the continuation of the *guthi*. The eldest male member used to be appointed as the owner of the land while the income of the land was used to perform the rituals of the *guthi*. By keeping such assets people would enjoy the celebration as there wouldn't be any burden in terms of money. But the land act of 2021 B.S.(1964 A.D.) changed a lot in this case.⁵ The lands which were kept for running of the *guthis* were regarded as personal land and much power was given to the *Mohi* (tiller - who looked after the land). *Mohi* is a person appointed by the owner to work in the land he owned. For this *Mohi* has to give certain amount of production to the owner, called as *Bāli*. After the enactment of the law, *Mohi* was entitled the guarantee of his tenancy right and deprived the landlord to remove the tenants without any strong reason which in past they could do as *Mohi pagani*. Because of this, rift was created between the land

⁴ This information I got from many people of younger generation whom I interviewed.

⁵ Nepal Gazette, 2021 B.S., Marga 1

owner (in this case, members of the *guthi*) and the *mohi*. As he was equally powerful, *Mohi* was not serious about *Bāli* which he has to pay. As a result most of the *guthi* lands were sold in nominal price.⁶ Another cause for selling the land was, after the ownerships was divided *mohi* was no longer responsible to look after the land of the owner and for the owner it was difficult and there was not any other option than selling it. Though the name of the eldest male member was mentioned as the owner of the land, all the members have equal right on the property and sometimes misunderstandings among these members resulted in the favour of the *mohi*. There are cases in which *mohi* has legally taken the whole land in his name in absence of any person who claimed for the same. The amount received from selling the land was either distributed among the *guthi* members or deposited in the bank. As the land were sold in nominal price and also the owner got only half the price it was not enough to run the *pūjā* ceremony as it used to be done. Members have to add more money to run it efficiently.⁷ In some groups of Chitrakars there is no provision of paying back the money to the host, they do not even have deposits in the bank, so all the expenses are made by the host alone. At present this group does not celebrate their *digu pūjā* in combined manner but individually and the members of the group expresses above mentioned reason for the discontinuation.⁸ In one similar case, the host was compelled to sell his ancestral house just to meet the expenses of the feast. This case is from Machhe Gaun near to Kirtipur where a person of Shrestha caste sold his house, celebrated the annual festival and then migrated.⁹ The economic status of the all the families involved in this *pūjā* is not same. The wealthy one wants to celebrate it in grand way while not so wealthy family does not want to spend more just for showing

⁶ As there always was clash between the tenant and the owner (normally more than 2/3 persons) even the buyer bargained the price and tried to buy in minimal afforded price.

⁷ In some groups the amount that they have saved deposit in the bank is enough to celebrate this *pūjā* but in other cases where the members have already distributed it among themselves or the amount is small, these members have to pay the amount that has been spent to run the *guthi*.

⁸ Interview with Indra Chitrakar, dated 2067-6-22

⁹ Interview with Padam Shrestha

off. This economic imbalance is one of the prime factors that have changed the way of celebration of this *pūjā* ceremony.

6.5 Strict Rules and Regulation

Rules to be followed during the *Digu pūjā* are very strict. Be it in a Hindu family or Buddhist family all the members should abide by the rules set by the seniors. There are certain restrictions on taking the food items also. From the evening of the first day boiled rice is avoided and only beaten rice is consumed for the next three days. All the members should not take anything until the *pūjā* completes which might takes hours to finish. In some groups even after completion of the *pūjā* there are certain other rituals like the first portion of the feast is offered to crow (jackal in some cases) and only after crow eats something from that offered portion, feast is served to everyone. Crow is considered to be found everywhere in the world so in the heaven also. So to offer the first portion to the crow means we are offering the first portion to the god which god in the appearance of crow accepts. If the crow doesn't come soon it is believed that god is not happy with the offerings and is not considered good for the host family. It gives mental tension to the host family to arrange and prepare the feast with much concern. In such situations when crow doesn't come sometimes up to the evening all the members do not eat anything. Sometimes members have to travel carrying the feast and searching for the crow.

Once the *pūjā* begins daughter in law cannot visit their natal home for that entire duration, no one is allowed to participate and take food at any other occasion like marriage, birthdays etc. Everyone should gather at the *pūjā* site at before mentioned time and remain at the *pūjā* which sometimes may be up to late night. Members should duly perform the assigned duties set by the seniors. If anyone by any means fails to perform his duty he has to pay the fine “*ban*”. So it was like to remain bounded in certain rules and regulations founded by the seniors rather than enjoying

the get togetherness. Today's younger generation hesitates to remain under such strict discipline and it may have a negative impact on the celebration of *digu pūjā*.

Present Changes in the Ritual

Nowadays there are very few families who still follow this, most of them leave one portion for crow but do not wait for the crow to come and eat something from that.¹⁰ Another change in this ritual is- in some families they have made bronze crow (Plate:11) which they carry along with the god and after completion of the *pūjā* a portion of feast is placed just in front of this bronze crow and it is touched by this crow's beak.¹¹ This change in ritual occurred because it gave much mental tension to all the members and specially the host family. It was ok if the crow comes in time but incase if don't then everyone questioned about the purity that has been followed.

In cases where it is custom to wait for a jackal to eat first portion of feast, they have made wooden jackal and do the same thing as in case of bronze crow. The families which have this tradition of offering the first portion to the jackal celebrate their *Digu pūjā* near Bhadrakali and belong to Maharjan caste. It may be the area they celebrate their *Digu pūjā* is near the bushy area and must be like small forest in the past. May be some jackals came out of that bushy area and the people who were celebrating their *pūjā* believed that god disguising in jackal came, so they offered the first portion of the feast regarding it as their lineage god or messenger of it. But now the area is one of the busiest roads in the capital and no one can even imagine having jackal there to make offering. So they have made wooden jackal, this means they can give continuation to the rituals though symbolic and also be comfortable in this modern world.¹²

¹⁰ One group of Manandhars of Thahity who restarted to celebrate the *digu pūjā* in a combined way after a span of nearly 18 years changed this rule in their second innings.

¹¹ This example also comes from Manandhar group of Thahity, according to one of the members this change have been adopted few years back with the consent of the priest.

¹² Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, on 2067-3-8

6.6 *Bali* (Animal Sacrifice)

Bali is a Sanskrit word meaning offering. Offering may be made to god, king, and evilspirit.¹³ This offering is made of anything from animals to fruits, small portions of cooked food, uncooked meat, blood etc. But the one that is gaining more attention in recent time is the *PashuBali* or the animal sacrifice. Though the animal right activists are raising voice against this animal sacrifice in the name of the god, experts in Hindu religion shares his view as

It is even written in the Vedas (holy book of Hindus) that animals have been created with the sole reason to be sacrificed in religious *pūjā* and *homa*. Though the substitution is also mentioned, people who eat meat must offer animal to the god as *Bali*.¹⁴

It is believed that because of the sins they committed in their previous birth they have been born as animals and the only way to salvation for them is to get slaughtered in religious offerings.¹⁵

Bau is a *Newari* word for *Bali*.¹⁶ In a *Newar* family everyday when lunch is cooked a certain portion of it is set aside at first, this is given as *Bau* in the name of deceased family members. This *Bali* is a non violent one. *Pashu Bali* or animal sacrifice (which can be regarded as violent one) during *Digu pūjā* or *kula devatā pūjā* of non *Newars* is compulsory except some exceptions where fruits instead of animal is offered as *Bali*. Among the non *Newars* fruits replace animals only in families who are vegetarians. Though animal sacrifice is regarded as sin in Buddhist community where

¹³ Pradip Dhakal, *Nepali Hindu Samajma Bali* (Bali in Nepali Hindu Society), unpublished M A dissertation submitted to Central Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology, T.U., 2060 B.S. p.8

¹⁴ Interview with Madhav Bhattarai, on 2067-9-8

¹⁵ Ratnakaji Bajracharya, *Bali Pūjā ya Yathartata* (Facts of Bali Pūjā), Kathmandu: Bajracharya Prakashan, 1993, p.22

¹⁶ Archana Devi Shakya, *Newar Bauddha Samajma Bali* (Bali in Newar Buddhist Society), unpublished M A dissertation submitted to Central Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology, 2060 B.S.

the first of the five bows taken according to Theravada is “Panani Pate wearamani sikha padam samadhiyam”¹⁷ (I will not kill animals), *pashu bali* is prevalent among Buddhist *Newars*. The Bajracharya who works as priest in *Newar* Buddhist families interprets it in this way “everyone has to die one day, those who die for good reasons or in *pūjā* rituals gets salvation instantly. Priest whispers the mantra “*punar janam pāpa nāsham*” in the ear of the animal to be sacrificed and they believe that the sacrificed animal gets salvation from rebirth cycle.¹⁸

Similar view is shared by a Brahmin priest, they offer the *purascarana pūjā* during the *kul devata pūjā* as lots of animals are sacrificed and this *pūjā* is performed so that the killed animals gets salvation from rebirth cycle.¹⁹

Second reason for *Bali* is - Buddhism believes in *Upaya Kausalyata*, if doing something that is considered as wrong benefits more it is not wrong to follow that. Here *Bali* is example for this as it is believed that god will be happy if offering of *Bali* is made and people also gets mental satisfaction so *Bali* is given in families who follows Buddhism.²⁰

Some of the Manandhar families of Laikusah do not perform animal *bali*. The present generation believes that the tradition of not killing any animal during lineage god *pūjā* is around 100 years old. As strong believer of Buddhism these people have opted to offer the substitution to animal *bali*.²¹

Ellingsen has mentioned such changes are seen during other festivals also. As he writes “Several respondents have ceased to slaughter goats for the annual festival of Dashain explaining this practice is incommensurable with their Buddhist belief”²²

¹⁷ This is the first Sheel of the five sheels commonly known as Pancha Sheel.

¹⁸ Interview with Ashok Bajracharya, dated 2067-3-8

¹⁹ Interview with Madhav Bhattarai, dated 2067-9-8

²⁰ Interview with Rajendra Man Bajracharya, dated 2067-6-11

²¹ As told by Mangal Siddhi Manandhar who is also a member of the same group.

²² Winfred Wllingsen, Appropriation of Place, Unpublished Ph.D dissertation submitted to University of Bergen, p.195

Ranas who celebrate their *dewāli* puja at Panchayani also has made certain changes in this regard. Long time ago they used to offer one sheep from each household with an addition of sheep in case of birth of a son, promotion in job, marriage of a son etc. As it was very expensive to arrange a large number of sheep what they do now is offer only one sheep and remaining number of sheep is replaced by goats.

In those families who follow Buddhism but still practices animal sacrifice *Bali* is not given directly to the main lineage god, may be this one is considered as a Buddhist deity who does not take fresh blood. Rather it is covered by something and *Bali* is given to either Ganesh or Bhairaba. This does not imply the main god takes only vegetarian offerings, *dya bo* (the feast offered to the god) contains cooked meat and while giving *sagun* boiled egg is offered to the main god as well. Though egg is taken as replacement for animal *Bali*, boiled egg does not contain any living particles or *jīv* inside it so it cannot be compared to *Bali*. It is also said that long back when the priest were well versed in tantric education, they had power to revive once slaughtered animal or used to create animals from the offerings which were later offered as *Bali*.

The philosophy behind *Bali* is to offer our self to god. Whenever we offer *pūjā* to god we should offer our self to god which seems impossible, so the animal that is offered as *Bali* represents us.²³ Even in Hindu epics it is written that whatever you eat you have to offer it to god. So in that case offering of animal as *Bali* is seen in most of the Brahmin/Chhetri Families. Only those who are pure vegetarian offers fruit instead of animals as *Bali*. There is provision of which fruit or vegetable to be offered as *Bali* in place of animal.

Goat and duck are usually chosen for *Bali* in *Newar* families while it is always goat in non *Newar* families. Hen which is used to give as *Bali* during other occasions specially during Dashain is not considered here. Buddhist *Newars* still do not consume chicken and egg throughout their life or at least for one month during *Gunla*,

²³ Interview with Baldev Juju, dated 2066-11-28

the holy month for Buddhist and during the entire *pūjā* period of lineage god. There is a popular story for why a Buddhist does not eat chicken. Devdutta a cousin of Buddha tried to kill him twice; once he threw a stone from cliff which Buddha narrowly escaped hurting only his toe. As days passed on wound was infected and this caused lot of pain to Buddha. As he was lying in floor with pain a hen came and ate impure blood from that wound. Miracle happened as the wound was healed without any other effort. So as hen healed the wound and gave Buddha relief from pain people who follow Buddhism (specially in Nepal) taking chicken and egg is taboo.²⁴ Another version for not using hen as *Bali* in auspicious *pūjā* is - hen is called as *ku panchi* meaning bad bird because it eats even its own excreta. So it is not worth considered to be used as *Bali*.

A male member of the same lineage should stroke the animal whatever animal may be and that too in a single stroke. It is said that if the animal is not killed in a single stroke then it should be replaced by another one. Also in many families no one comes forward to do this act, since no outsider can perform this, people choose to replace this ritual. Another reason is the hiking price of the animals that are given as *Bali* during the *pūjā* season. Specially during the *pūjā* season price are hiked as in many families it is compulsory to offer animal for *Bali* and the sellers takes this as opportunity. And above all *pashu bali* has come under heavy criticism in the past few decades. May be of any reason, people have sought for alternatives for *Bali* that is given in *Digu pūjā*.

²⁴ Soka Gakkai, *Dictionary of Buddhism* Tokyo:Soka Gakkai, 2002. pp.111-12

CHAPTER VII

***Kula Pūjā*: the Lineage God worship among Non-Newars**

Not only Newars but other Nepalese also celebrate the *pūjā* of their lineage god in a grand way. Most of them have now settled in the capital but still for the *pūjā* of the same they visit their home village. This shows the importance of the *pūjā* ceremony. Though the rituals are different the concept is similar that is all the family members belonging to a single lineage gathers, worship their lineage god and seek blessings of their lineage god for the happiness and prosperous life of the family members. In the following chapter few case studies have been described about the rituals observed by Non Newars during their *Kula Devatā pūjā*.

7.1 Brahmin

7.1.1 Pant

There are variations in worship style and rituals among the Brahmins and Kṣetrīs who have long been settled in Kathmandu. Most of the groups, though have settled here permanently, still observe their *kulāyani pūjā* at their ancestral village. Among Brahmins and Kṣetrīs, this *kulāyani pūjā* is observed during the months of Mangsir and Paush (Oct-Nov), in some cases extending up to the month of Falgun (Feb-March) also. Most of the groups celebrate it on the full moon day of Mangsir while there are groups who celebrate it in some specific *tithi* based on the lunar calendar. While in some groups there are strange rules which decide the date for the celebration. This group celebrates their *kula pūjā* in every twelve years.¹ These people are Bhardwaj Pant and they consider Sun as their lineage god. It seems like as if number twelve is associated with the Sun, the trend to celebrate the *kula pūjā* in every twelve years is in connection to that. It is during the month of Paush (Dec-Jan), the

¹ Interview with Lieutenant General Amar Pant

third Sunday of the month is the day for the *pūjā*, but if there are only four Sundays in that month, then the celebration is postponed until a year in which the month of Paush has five Sundays. Not like the Julian calendar where the number of days is similar for every month (only leap year being the exception) the number of days in a month varies every year in Nepali calendar. So, even after twelve years, if this condition is not met, this group cancels their *kula pūjā* for that year. When the necessary condition is met, preliminary process is started a year ahead. Everything is preplanned in advance. As whole Pant family with the Bhardwaj gotra celebrates this *pūjā* together, gathering of hundreds of people is expected. The *pūjā* is carried out in their ancestral place i.e. Gorkha. A big ground near the temple of their *Iṣṭa devatā* (*Maidan kāli*) is used for this purpose. Couple of days ahead the main *pūjā*, this site is cleaned and is covered from all the sides using tents, which from inside is again divided into small room like partitions. All the family members as well as the invited guests remain inside this partitioned place. Though the daughters (both married and unmarried) and daughter-in-laws are allowed to participate, the main *pūjā* is done by the senior male member in which he is assisted by other male members, as the female members do not have any direct role in the main *pūjā* ceremony. Some of the *pūjā* rituals begin a day ahead. The ritual carried out on this day is called as *Pūrvāṅga*. It can be correlated with the *Choyelā bhu* of Newars as the main theme of both the rituals is related with purifications. There are certain food items which are not allowed to take from this day citing the purification rules. Along with garlic, tomatoes, onion etc. these people do not take salt during the entire *pūjā* period. Not only in twelve years, every Sunday in the month of Paush, have they followed this restriction. Even the common people who take *Vrata* in the name of Sun do not take salt on Sunday. So this restriction might be in connection to their lineage god i.e. Sun. Some rituals similar to the *sraddha* are also performed on this day of *Pūrvāṅga*.

In the morning of the *pūjā*, all the family members gather at the *pūjā* site. Adhikari priest are appointed who are well qualified to recite the Veda (holy book of Hindus),

perform *homa* (sacred fire) and other related *pūjās*. In the past, there used to be *homa* by 108 priests, which with the changing trends has changed to either 64 or in some cases 32 as well. They have a golden image of Sun which is worshipped on this occasion, but there is no jewelry which is adorned to the lineage god. Female members prepare the feast; especially *khir*, *puwā*, *dahi* (curd) etc. made along with other vegetables; as purely vegetarian offerings are made to the lineage god. Among these, *puwa* is the main offering which is made by cooking rice flour in pure ghee. All the vegetables made are also without salt. Even in day to day life, when something different is cooked, it is offered first to the image of the sun god at the house. The invited guests who include friends, married daughters along with their kids are also offered the same. But the concerned family might add some sweets or other items for the guests they have invited and this expense is not calculated in the total.

Though the feast seems simple and not much costly, the cost is still high because of the extensive *pūjā* and engagement of large number of priests. All day through, some priests are engaged in performing *homa* (sacred fire) for which they need tons of ghee. They make a tunnel like pipe from the branches of banana tree from which continuous flow of the ghee is directed to the *homa* and this is maintained until the completion of the *pūjā*. These people do not have any assets, either in the form of land or bank balance for the celebration of *kula pūjā*. So a year ahead of the celebration, they hold meetings for the same and calculate the expenses and raise funds. As the celebration is done once in twelve years, there is no provision of giving all the responsibilities to a single family. All the participating families are equally responsible, and likewise, someone may take some specific task upon their own wish like arrangement of tents, ghee, preparing feast etc.

After the completion of all the *pūjā* rituals, priest puts *tikā* as *prasād* to the male members of the family who in turn also puts *tikā* to the priest with *dakshinā* (remuneration). The head of the family in turn puts *tikā* to his family members.

Daughters are regarded as goddess, so along with *tikā*, *dakshinā* is also given. That may be the reason that the head of the family gives the *tikā*.

There is no separate ritual for introducing the daughter-in-law married in between these twelve years or the sons/daughters born in the lineage after the previous *kula pūjā*. They simply take part in the *kula pūjā*, but as all the members of the lineage gather at that time, they are just introduced to other members. The trend of offering some ornaments to the lineage god in case of promotion, marriage of son/daughter, birth of children or grandchildren is not found, but they do put money or offer ornaments in such occasions to their *Iṣṭa devatā* i.e. *maidan kāli*. They have one *guthi* which arranges priest and other items necessary for the daily *pūjā* of the goddess. Besides, on the eighth day of the bright lunar fortnight in the month of Aswin and Chaitra, grand *pūjā* is offered to the *Iṣṭa devatā* which is attended by the Bharadwaj Panta. On the day of grand *pūjā*, bali of a goat is offered to the *Iṣṭa devatā*.

7.1.2 Lohini

Another Brahmin family which is still continuing the *kula pūjā* without making much change is the Lohinis of Nuwakot. These people celebrate their *kula pūjā* every year.² They worship Mahadeva as their lineage god. Couple of decades earlier, they used to gather and celebrate the *pūjā* ceremony at their ancestral village. But as most of the families are settled here in Kathmandu, they started celebrating it here. During those days, at their ancestral place, they used to celebrate their *kula pūjā* in a forest where there were little or no chance for an outsider to get the view. Now it is difficult to arrange similar setting, so these days they create forest like scene by putting the big branches of tree or shoots with leaves. Not only female members of the lineage, even the priest is not allowed to enter the main *pūjā* area. The male head of the family performs the *pūjā* while priests are appointed only to perform the *homa* (sacred fire). The *pūjā* is performed annually on the same tithi based on the lunar calendar. Though,

² Interview with Pushkar Lohini

not allowed to participate in the main *pūjā*, female members help a lot in preparation by making arrangements for the *pūjā* items as well as making different food items to be offered to the lineage god during the *pūjā*. As the offerings made should be fresh, women wake up early in the morning and prepare things. After giving continuation to the *pūjā* at Kathmandu, it is performed not at any open site but in the garden of the senior-most member's house. There is no provision of giving the responsibility to one family every year to look after the arrangements for the *pūjā*. It is always the senior-most male member's responsibility, though he is helped by all the members starting from arranging things for *pūjā* to feast. Here the senior-most male member is decided not by his age but by his relation. Younger brother is counted first before son. A day before the main *pūjā*, ritual of *purvanga* is done. All the members take only a single meal on that day along with certain other restrictions as only vegetarian food without onion, tomato, garlic etc can be consumed. Male members shave their heads as part of purification. *Mandaps* (place to put the idols of the god for *pūjā*) is prepared by the male members. Nowadays, female members even prepare the necessary sweets on that day, as it was difficult to prepare these sweets on the same day. These sweets include *Pancha pakwan*, *sel* (made from rice flour), *bārā*, *puri* etc. As far as possible, they use homemade rice flour to prepare these items. Cow's milk, ghee and honey are used in making the *panchāmrit* is also prepared at home so as to ensure the purity.

All the male members carry the idols of the gods to the *Mandap* prepared behind the curtains. Priests remain outside and make arrangements for *homa*. The senior male member starts *pūjā* in which he is helped by his fellow male members. All the *pūjā* materials brought are placed in one place. *Pāñchāyani*, the combined form of five supreme gods are worshipped. At times, they inform priest about which god they are worshipping or which act they are doing so the Priest can perform the *homa* and recite the *mantras* for the same. As they get engaged in *pūjā*, a group of low caste Damai plays the traditional musical instrument *Panche Bājā* in the same premises. Female members start cooking feast. All the items prepared are vegetarian. There is no

provision to offer *Bali* in this group. But just a decade ago, they practiced a strange style to offer the animal to the god. A goat in the name of the god was freed after making some *sankalpa* (vow) during the *pūjā*. It was either freed or handed to priest or the grandchildren from daughter. Nowadays, in replacing this ritual, they offer coconut to the god. After completing all the rituals, male members again carry the idols of the god to the *pūjā* room and then the female members are allowed to take a glimpse of the *mandap* where all the *pūjā* took place.

There is no other ritual to introduce the newlywed daughter-in-law or new born sons. While sending the *pūjā* kit, the concerned families also send an additional *pūjā* kit in the name of the new members. But it is compulsory to attend the *pūjā* ceremony for the first time by these members. Sons are taken to *pūjā* site only if their rice feeding ceremony has been completed. The natal home of the daughter-in-law does not have to send any *pūjā* kit or gift as in the case of Newars. Here in case of Lohini, they invite their married daughters to this *pūjā* ceremony along with their kids citing the fact that they were also born in the same lineage. But, as no female members, even the unmarried daughters and daughter-in-laws are allowed to take part in the *pūjā* rituals, their participation is also limited to the feast only. In other Brahmin castes, there is variation in rule, where some families do not even allow the married daughters to be part of the feast, but in some cases though they are restricted to go to the *pūjā* site, they can come and enjoy the feast at their natal home.

After completing the *pūjā* rituals, the elder male member puts *tikā* to all the family members. The daughters regarded as goddess Kumari or Laxmi are offered with *dakshinā* as well. Then the feast prepared is served which though is vegetarian sometimes non veg items are also added. This addition of non vegetarian items in the feast is a recent development. As the priest involved gave permission saying that after the idols of the gods are taken back to their respective places, the *pūjā* formally ends and so does the restriction to take certain food items.

In this group, there is no need to calculate the expenditure and collect from each family as they do have a *guthi* for this which has a lot of land and deposits as assets. So up to now, no one remembers that they ever had collected or paid money for this.

7.2 Kṣetrī

7.2.1 Rana

The Ranas of Kathmandu celebrate their *kulāyani pūjā* at Panchayani which is situated at Thapathali. They celebrate it in every alternate year on *Chandi Purnimā* which is on the full moon day of Baishak.³ Certain groups of Adhikari and Parajuli who have settled in Kathmandu also celebrate their *dewāli pūjā* at the same site. Adhikari and Parajuli have been celebrating their *dewāli pūjā* on even years while in odd years, Ranas have their *kulaayani pūjā*. In Sanskrit *Pancha* means five, so the place is named Panchayani on the basis of the five similar structured temples built in the same premises. Before this temple was built by Jang Bahadur in 1900 B.S. and completed in 1911 B.S., Ranas used to celebrate their *kulapūjā* at a temple in Gorkha.⁴ And still many Kunwer households in Gorkha follow the same tradition. In these temples, one can find lord Ganesha, *Kuladevi*, Shri Bhimsen, Shri Iṣṭadevi, Shri Bhairab, Shri Astabhujadevi, Shri Surya mandir, Radhakrishna mandir, Shri Hanuman mandir, Shiv Mandir and Shri Narsingh Mandir.⁵ Out of all these, in the *Kuladevi* mandir there is always a curtain beyond which only an ordained person can enter and offer the *pūjā* on some specific day i.e. on *kulāyani pūjā*.

Though the celebration lasts only for a single day, preparation especially the purifications starts a day before. All the members, even the daughter-in-law (although they don't have a major role in *Kulapūjā*) take only a single meal prepared in ghee.

³ Subarna Shamser J B Rana, "Nepal Ka Ranaji Haruko Dewali", *Smarika*, Kathmandu: Panchayani Prakashan, 2056 B.S., p.22

⁴ Ibid., p.22

⁵ Renu Shrestha Pokharel, "Thapathali sthit Panchayan Chhetrako Sanskritik Adhyayan", M.A. dissertation submitted to NeHCA Tribhuvan University, 2066 B.S. (unpublished)

Food items termed as impure eg. Tomato, garlic, meat, gingers and even oil is excluded while preparing the food.⁶ Not only the family members purify themselves for the upcoming event, but even the gods at the *pūjā* site are cleaned and all the oil lamps are cleaned and filled with either oil or ghee for the next day. The main priest then as an invitation offers the *pūjā* to the *Kula devi* and leaves the door open all night. On the following day *pūjā* items are prepared at the site. The senior most male member then leads the procession by carrying a flag.⁷ Unlike among Newars, where the senior most male member is decided by the age, here the eldest son of a family which is regarded as the senior family (Nepali: *Jetho Ghar*) leads the procession to the temple regardless of his age.⁸ All the *pūjā* is carried out by Adhikari priests. Only the male members take part in the core *pūjā* ceremony while daughters are not allowed to join them at the *pūjā* site. Daughter-in-law helps in preparing the *pūjā* items. One of the important parts of this *pūjā* is the *bali* i.e. offering of the animal to the god. Long back, these groups used to sacrifice as many animals as the number of male members in their clan. Nowadays they give only one sheep as main *bali* and one goat per family. Along with regular *bali*, additional *bali* is offered in case of a marriage of a son, or a birth of a son, promotion in office etc.⁹ Special *pūjā* is performed to the main lineage god known as *Kula Devi* while all the gods in the temple premises are worshipped on that day. Besides the gods in the temple these people do not have any other metal images of the lineage god, which is a common feature in a Newar community. Priests perform *homa* i.e. sacred fire in the temple premises in which the liver of the sheep that has been sacrificed as main *bali* is offered. Rice pudding is also offered to the same sacred fire. This is prepared by the daughter-in-law at the *pūjā* site. After the completion of the *pūjā*, this liver is taken as main *prasād* and is distributed to all the members. Even a member who could not participate by some reason also gets his share of this *prasād*. *Bali* is not directly

⁶ Interview with Maya Rana on 2067-6-20

⁷ Rana, f.n..3, p.23

⁸ Interview with Maya Rana 2067-6-20

⁹ Interview with Maya Rana 2067-6-20

offered to the *Kula Devi* but the animal is sacrificed to *Maulo*, sometimes called as *Masto*, which is a long wooden pillar situated in front of the temple. Some people also think that this *Maulo* represents the *Khadga* (Sword) of the god. Among Ranas it is not compulsory to perform certain rituals for formal introduction of the newlywed daughter-in-law or new born sons during this *kula pūjā*. After the rice feeding ceremony of a son, silver lamp (Nepali: *cādi ko diyo*) engraved with his name is made in which they put a 108 folded cotton stick and fill it with ghee. These *diyos* are refilled every time they celebrate *kula pūjā* and are lit in front of the *Kula* devi. After completion, all the silver lamps are stored in one store room.¹⁰

Though not compulsory, all the members both male and female wear red outfits. Along with the *pūjā* of the gods in the premises of the Paanchayani temple, special *pūjā* is offered to 51 pithas. Priest goes to the nearby pithas to offer *pūjā* while the far ones are offered *pūjā* from the same site just recalling the name. Everyone remains with empty stomach until the *pūjā* and *homa* concludes. Though they do not have the tradition of organizing grand feast on this day, it is believed that they should at least eat something at the *pūjā* site. So, all the families take small amount of snacks prepared at home. Every year one family gets its turn to host the event. In case of Ranas, this hosting is limited to arrangement of the *pūjā* items necessary for the *kulāyani pūjā*. Along with that another responsibility for the host family is to distribute the *prasād* to all the families. Special care is taken to send the *prasād* to a member who did not attend the *pūjā*. Though not allowed to participate in the *pūjā*, daughters even after their marriage get this *prasād*. All the families contribute certain amount of money which is used in purchasing the sheep for main *bali*, different *pūjā* items which includes clothes for the priest and gods also, and finally *dakshina* (remuneration) to the priest. Upon completion of the *pūjā*, all the members first take the *prasād* and then the snacks which they carried from their house. Restriction to avoid certain food items ends with the *pūjā* and in the evening they can take anything.

¹⁰ Interview with Maya Rana 2067-6-20

7.2.2 Shah

Alamdevi is the main lineage god of Shahs of Kathmandu. The main temple of this goddess is situated at the Lasarka, Syanjha in the western Nepal. These people from long back have continued this trend to celebrate their *kula pūjā* at the premises of the temple (Newari: *Porpa Ajima*) at Ranibari. It is said that when they first started to celebrate their *Kula pūjā* here, one person carried the special *yantra* of the goddess from the main temple. They were told to observe him and celebrate their *Kula pūjā* at the point where the carrier gets asleep. So they believe that the open place in the premises of the *Porpa ajima* temple is the place where the carrier of the goddess's *yantra* got asleep.¹¹ They do not have any metal image or accessories of the lineage god. On the day of *Narsingh Chaturdashi* (fourteenth day of the bright lunar fortnight in the nepali month of Baishak) all the male members gather at the *pūjā* site and make a separate circle by tent so that no outsider can have an insight view. Even the small boys of their own lineage who still have not performed Bratavanda or coming of age ceremony for boys cannot look inside. The priest for the event is a Brahmin from either Aryal or Bhattarai caste. Though the priest at the Alamdevi temple is a Magar, here, the *pūjā* is carried out by a Brahmin priest. It may be because when they started their *kula pūjā* here, it was difficult to find Magar families who had settled here in the capital and so it was the Brahmins who performed the priestly work. *pūjā* is started after they ritually place *Kalash*, *Dīp* and Ganesh in front of a possibly big branch of *Khari* (Sci. Name: *Celtis australis* linn., Common Name: European Nettlewood)¹² and *Bhimsenpāti* (Sci.Name: *Buddleia asiatica* lour, Common Name: Butterfly Bush)¹³. They don't have any metal image of the god nor the jewelry. Actually the *Khari* represents goddess Kumari here and the *Bhimsenpāti* is used to give the place the natural look as the original temple as there are lot of *Bhimsenpāti* tress at the

¹¹ Interview with Girvan Shah on 2067-6-25

¹² Keshab Shrestha, *A Field Guide to Nepali Names for Plants*, Natural History Museum, Institute of Science and Technology, Kirtipur: Silver Jubilee Publication Series, Tribhuvan University, Second Edition, 1984, p. 56.

¹³ Ibid, p. 56

Alamdevi temple at Lasarka. Though the main lineage god is Alam devi, on this day they offer their *pūjā* to the trio of goddess i.e, Mahakali, Mahalaxmi and Mahasaraswati. For the Shahs, *kula pūjā* is a single day affair which they celebrate every year unless any death pollution occurs during that period including that specific day. If death pollution occurs then there is no any other option rather than cancelling it for that year. They do have certain other *pūjā* on the following day which can be taken as the continuation of the *kula pūjā*. On the following day they worship *Vāyu devatā* at Hanuman Dhoka temple. *Vayu Devata* is also worshipped on the full moon day of Mangsir (Nov-Dec). Besides the lineage god, Shahs worship *Dakshinkāli* and *Gorkhakāli* as their *Iṣṭa devatā*. These *Iṣṭa devatā* are especially worshipped and offered *bali* on *Baishakh Sukla Astami* (eighth day of the bright lunar fortnight in the nepali month of Baishakh). But it seems that this ritual is not followed regularly these days.¹⁴

Bali, (animal sacrifice) in the name of the god is the main part of this *pūjā*. As far as the present generation can remember, the numbers of sheep sacrificed equal the total number of male family members. Boys whose *bratavanda* is still to be performed is not counted here. On the first *kula pūjā* after *bratavanda*, he enters the *pūjā* site with the sheep and this is taken as the formal introduction of the boy to the lineage. No other formal introduction ritual is followed thereafter. Before this, though he can participate, it is limited only to the feast and not the *pūjā*. Till date, they have continued this trend without any compromise. *Bali* is given directly to the goddess Mahakali, Mahalaxmi and Maha Saraswati which are represented by the branches of tree and *yantra*. In absence of *Maulo* (to which the *Bali* is offered in most of the cases) killing the animal is little difficult in this case. Animal is not slaughtered in one instance but in a cruel manner.

Participation in *kula pūjā* is limited only to male members of the family. Not only are the daughters as in case of Ranas, but daughter-in-laws are also not allowed to join the

¹⁴ Interview with Girvan Shah 2067-6-25

kula pūjā ceremony. All day, they wait with empty stomach at home until the male members return from the *pūjā* with *prasād*. Another strange feature in case of Shahs is that their friends can participate in their *kula pūjā* regardless of their caste, but the participation is limited only to the feast.¹⁵

Pūjā offered to the god to some extent have similarities with the Newars. *Samaybaji* composed of *Syabaji* (flattened and fried beaten rice), *Chiurā* (beaten rice), pieces of boiled duck's egg, fried small fishes along with other fruits are offered to the god. *Panchamrit* made up of five elements (cow's milk, ghee, sugar, water and curd)¹⁶ is also important in *pūjā*. Sacred fire is lit by the priest in which liver and kidney of the sacrificed animal is offered.¹⁷ After completion of the *pūjā*, the priest sprinkles the holy water from the *kalash* to all the members and then they start cooking the food stuffs. As no ladies are allowed to participate, it is only the male members of the family who take part in cooking. All day through, they cook different items from the sheep's meat. Besides the Sahebjū Shahs, in all other group, meat of the sacrificed animal is consumed on the field i.e. at the *pūjā* site as it is believed that it will bring ill luck if they bring it back to home. Remaining portion is dumped so that eagle, vulture or any another animal cannot eat it. No other person from any other caste beside Shah has any role in *pūjā*. They carry *pūjā* materials themselves or the priest is given responsibility to arrange the *pūjā* materials. If in case some other person carries the material, he cannot enter the *pūjā* site and he should leave it in the outer premises. Friends are invited with whom they share the feast.

As these Shahs belong to high class status, their forefathers had put aside a lot of land as asset for the *pūjā* related either to lineage god or *Vāyu devatā*. Till date, these people have used the income of those land and deposits only to carry on the *pūjā* related with *Vāyu devatā* and not of the lineage god. They pay themselves for the

¹⁵ Interview with Triratna Manandhar

¹⁶ Subarna Shakya, *Lya Katha Ya Sike Kha* (Informations at the basis of Numericals), Kathmandu : Olympus Club, Om Baha, p.25

¹⁷ Interview with Girvan Shah 2067-6-25

sheep which is given as *bali* and for the *pūjā* items everybody brings *pūjā* materials from home which is collectively used there. Apart from this, certain *pūjā* materials are always brought from the *Jetho Ghar*. Here Jetho (Nepali: Eldest) is similar to the *Thākuli* in Newar society. Only difference being *Thākulai* is made according to his age while *Jetho Ghar* is the family whose male member was the senior most people when they first started *kula pūjā* here. So even now the elder son of the *Jetho Ghar* performs the main *pūjā*.

7.3 Other Communities

7.3.1 Gurung¹⁸

A Gurung community is divided into two endogamous clans known as *Char jāt* and *Sorha jāt*.¹⁹ Gurungs also have a tradition of worshipping their lineage god. However, their way is little different to what we commonly see in other caste. For them, the *pūjā* of the lineage god is only a single family affair. There is a specific place in traditional Gurung house where they place the lineage god. This is optional though and so they can choose either to place it or not. Mostly, the priests and persons holding high government post have continued with this trend of worshipping lineage god. The main reason behind choosing not to place the lineage god at home is the complexity in the rituals as this can be very expensive also. There is also another belief that if they try to minimize or make changes in the rituals, the adverse effect will haunt them. So, mostly the priest and in some cases, persons holding higher government posts have the lineage god in their house. The *pūjā* is carried out every year or once in every three or five years.

Gurung priests perform the *pūjā* of the lineage god at their home as they think lineage god would protect them in odd situations. A priest has to perform the after death

¹⁸ Interview with Jagman Gurung on 2070-1-19

¹⁹ Dor Bahadur Bista, *Peoples of Nepal*, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Fourth Edition, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1980, p.77

* Based on interview with Jagman Gurung on 2070-1-19

rituals and in such situations he leads the funeral procession to the cremation site, and also receives the money that is placed in the body of the dead person. In their opinion, the lineage god confers them that strength which helps them to perform their tasks easily. In rural areas, there is a strong belief that people still perform witchcraft which could harm a person easily. So, it is compulsory among the priests to place lineage god and offer its annual *pūjā* to get protected from such evil actions. If a priest is informed to attend a funeral and perform rituals there, before leaving the house he first informs and prays for his safety with his lineage god. After coming back from the site, he again worships the god and acknowledges that with the grace of the god he is fine and has completed his duties as a priest.

Families who do not have lineage god, worship the late ancestors of the family called as *Pitri*. *Pitri pūjā* is carried out twice a year. First one, on the first day of Nepali month of Sharwan while the second one on the seventh day of Dashain i.e., Fulpati. Regardless of the specific day on which the person has died, these people perform *pūjā* in the name of the late ancestors in a combined manner on the before mentioned two days. Similar *pūjā* of the late ancestors is performed a day after Fulpati at the house of the priest. It is mainly because the priest is busy throughout the previous day carrying out *pūjā* at different households where he is a priest. Another reason is he has to also show the collection made on the previous day to his lineage god and express gratitude to the god for the same. When such *Pitri pūjā* is performed, offerings are made in the name of their late ancestors and also the servants who had served them.

Gurungs call their lineage god '*Failu*' in their native language. They don't have any metal image or accessories associated with the god. The idol of the lineage god is made up of good quality bamboo and it is similar in all the cases. Though there is no specific season or time when all the Gurung families celebrate their *Failu pūjā*, they do have certain limitations or rules for the celebration. Celebration should fall in the odd number month according to the Nepali calendar which is called as *Failu* month. Especially, the *pūjā* is performed in the ninth month of the Nepali calendar as it

coincides with the Gurung New Year. Celebration is always performed in the bright fortnight i.e., *Sukla Pakṣa* and on auspicious tithis. Generally *Purnimā* or full moon day, *ashtami*, *dashami*, or *pancami* are chosen and if such tithis coincide with Monday or Thursday, then it is considered to be very good. If any family is organizing the *pūjā* for the first time, they have to make the idol of the lineage god from the bamboo. In this community, there is a belief that cutting bamboo on Mondays or Tuesdays brings misfortune. So even if the auspicious tithi and day coincides, they do not perform the *Failu pūjā* on such days. This *pūjā* may be performed annually or once in two or three years. If any lady in the house is pregnant then the *pūjā* is cancelled for that year. Pregnancy in case of married daughter is not counted in this connection. This *pūjā* is a single day and night affair where the preparations are made during the day time and the *pūjā* is performed at night as they believe this *pūjā* is offered to the supernatural power which is active during night time. Priest performs the *pūjā* in presence of all the family members. They also can invite other relatives for the same but it is not compulsory to participate.

The offerings that are made to the lineage god reflect the life style of the Gurungs. This offering must include *mārsi dhān ko bhāt* (good quality cooked rice), meat of *dānphe* (lophophorous), *asalā* fish and homemade liquor. They believe that people offered what they could to the god and the items that are offered shows that Gurungs settlement was in very good area where they could have *dānphe*, best quality rice and fish, etc. Nowadays, as it is illegal to kill a *dānphe*, offering either a chicken or simply an egg is accepted instead of *dānphe*. When they used to offer *dānphe*, they called it *chara ko masu* or bird's meat. So as chicken is also a bird, such change is made on the basis of the same.

Most important part in this *pūjā* is the offering of the animal. If any family is organizing this *pūjā* for the first time, then sacrifice of a sheep is given. Healthy sheep, whose hair has not been cut, is selected. They also have a tradition to offer a garland made up of and by blowing the intestine. After completing the *pūjā*, the skin

of the sacrificed animal from head to tail is pulled out. Priest, without touching it by hands and just holding it by his teeth, takes it around all the family members who are present and sitting there and then finally throws it as far as he can from the main entrance. Of the thrown skin, if the head part is facing the entrance of the house then it is believed that it is not a good sign. It is assumed that there would have been some shortcomings in the *pūjā* and that the god was not satisfied. *Pūjā* is repeated in such case. However, if the head portion of the skin after it was thrown is facing in the other direction, then the *pūjā* is complete. Reasons like this could have been one of the factors why the *pūjā* is losing its importance among the Gurung community. Another reason is that they describe it as an expensive one.

Second thing that they do with the sacrificed animal is that they read the shape, size and veins of the liver and the priest makes some predictions from that. It is called *jokhanā herne*. This practice can be compared with similar practices people used to follow during ancient times as we find such examples while reading ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia.

There is no any special ritual for the introduction of the daughter in law or new born babies. But there is one another ritual in which the priest passes blessings of the god to all family members gathered at the centre by covering them with a big saucer. New family members must be present for the same which can be taken as their formal acceptance in the family.

7.3.2 Yadas of Terai²⁰

Diyāt is a group of people sharing same surname and *gotra* and are believed to be offspring of same ancestor. Among the Yadavs of Terai region, the patrilineal group is represented by this group named as *Diyāt*. This group celebrates the *pūjā* of their lineage god in a grand way every alternate year. This *pūjā* called as *ghar pūjā* is conducted inside the boundary wall of their house. A temple of the lineage god is

²⁰ Based on interview with Pitamber Lal Yadav on 2070-1-22

constructed inside the premises of the house and the *pūjā* of the lineage god is conducted there. Anything except *pūjā* items are restricted to take inside this house. One has to clean his hand and feet each time prior to entering this place. Yadavs of terai celebrate their *ghar pūjā* during the Nepali month of Magh (Feb-March). This *pūjā* is a single day affair. One group celebrates it two days after Sri Panchami while the other group celebrates it on next Wednesday after *Sri Panchami*. Wednesday is considered as auspicious day to conduct any *pūjā* among the terai people. *Ghar pūjā* holds a different place among other *pūjā* ceremonies as it is the only *pūjā* that requires the animal sacrifice although majority of the people offering the *pūjā* are pure vegetarians.

The lineage god worshipped inside this house is a mould of clay without any distinct figure. On the day of the *pūjā*, no additional decorative is added to the main god. In case of Newars, decorative are added so as to give liveliness to the stone gods. Only the *chanwā* is replaced every year and in addition to this, a garland made up of *rudraksh* is placed.

Pūjā is performed by any male member of the family regardless of his age. But the priority is given to the seniors. Offering of animal as a sacrifice to the lineage god is the distinct feature of this *ghar pūjā*. Goat is offered as *Bali*, while in some groups there is a tradition of offering sheep as well. In addition to this, one hen is also offered as *Bali*. Interestingly, this offering of hen is not made to the lineage god but some other god named as *Mira* believed to be a Muslim. Before few decades, most of the members of the Yadav family were pure vegetarians, so they used to invite their relatives from other nearby villages to share the feast as no outsiders were eligible to take the meat of the offered animal. Offering of the animal is made by a member who is not vegetarian and if there is no one in the family who is not vegetarian then a relative or friend sharing the same caste is called to do the offering. From sacrificing to cleaning and cooking of the meat, everything takes place inside the compound wall of the house. This meat can be consumed till the next day, but before the sunset, the

remaining portion is buried in the garden or in an open place inside the boundary wall of the house. While burying, it is buried very deep so that crow, dog or any other animal may not reach it.

A Muslim is invited to perform the offering of the hen. He is contacted few days earlier and on the day of the *pūjā*, he comes with hen and makes the offering of the hen to Mira. As hen is considered as impure to be consumed, this Muslim takes back the offered hen along with the utensils and other necessary items required for cooking. The reason for considering hen as impure to be consumed is different from what the Newars in the capital have to say. In Terai, long back, only Muslim families used to eat chicken and as there was no concept of poultry farming they used to raise chickens and their Hindu counterpart didn't even touch it believing that it purely belonged to the Muslims.

The present generation believes that the tradition to perform *ghar pūjā* every alternate year is a later adoption. Offering of the animal requires a lot of money. Also, in most of the cases, they would usually have to bury all the meat as there were very few members who were non vegetarian, so looking at the cost, they might have started the tradition to celebrate it every other year. But even now, if something happens, like an unusual death or an accident in the year when they didn't celebrate their *ghar pūjā*, they think that it was because of not performing the *pūjā*. All the families who belong to the same gotra used to gather and take decisions in such matters. But, nowadays, this solidarity among the groups is not found. Some groups may even celebrate their *ghar pūjā* annually while majority of them are celebrating it in every alternate year.

Married daughters are not formally invited to participate in the *ghar pūjā* at their natal home. After marriage, it is mandatory for them to participate at their husband's house. If they come, they also can enjoy equal participation. There is no tradition of formal introduction of the daughter in law or new born babies.

In addition to *Bali*, *Khīr* (rice pudding) is important in this *pūjā*. Besides, sweets are also offered to the god and later taken as *prasād*. There are some groups who are raising concern and awareness against animal sacrifice in the name of the god. These people are slowly replacing the tradition of offering Bali by offering sweets instead. While doing so, they offer sweets worth equivalent to the animal.

If brothers who are living separately want to celebrate this *ghar pūjā* separately, all they have to do is to build one temple for the lineage god inside the premises of their house. They can then perform the *pūjā*. As they don't share the same place, all the groups of same caste perform *ghar pūjā* on the same day at their own houses.

7.4 Comparative Study among Newars and Non Newars

Though many Newar writers opines that the Non Newars copied the tradition of lineage god worship from Newars, the differences in the rituals, time period does not fully supports this view. The festive season for Newars starts in the nepali month of Baishakh and runs for almost a month while the Non Newars celebrate it during the month of Mangsir and Paush with some exception to the Non-Newar caste who have settled here in Kathmandu long before. These people celebrate their *Kula pūjā* during the month of Baishakh. There are no other similarities except this, for them this *pūjā* is just a single day affair with the male members actively performing all the *pūjā* rituals and females having minimal role or no role at all. The month in which most of the Non Newars celebrate their *Kula pūjā* coincides with the harvesting season. As farming being the main profession of the people this is the time when they can offer the first production to the lineage god and also perform the annual *pūjā* of the same. Most of the things that are offered to the god should be homemade and as far as possible this trend is maintained up to now. There are lot of variations in the rituals that are performed by the Non Newars while observing their *Kula pūjā*. Even among the people who share the same caste rituals are different in different areas. For eg- Subedis of Bajahg just performs rituals similar to Sraddha to mark Dewali or *Kula*

pūjā.²¹ For them *Kula pūjā* means to offer the *pūjā* to late ancestors in the family. But, for Subedis residing at other places it is not only the *pūjā* related with late ancestors but of the lineage god also, so lots of other *pūjā* rituals are performed on the specific day. These *pūjā* are followed by the songs sang in the praise of the late ancestors. They call it “*Kushā Bhatta ko Fāg*” and these song has word of praise for their late ancestors. These songs can be compared with the *cacā* and *dāfā bhajan* sang in the Newar community. Only difference being the latter one doesn’t have any word of praise for the late ancestors.

Non Newars perform their *Kula pūjā* in quite private manner. Even if the place is at open place they cover it by tents and make sure that no one can have a look inside. More precaution is taken in prepare the actual *pūjā* site where only male members are allowed to enter. Sons who still have to go through the coming of age ceremony or *Bratabanda* are restricted to enter the core area. Not only this, in some caste even the priest who recites the sacred mantras during entire *pūjā* rituals sits just outside this core *pūjā* area. In case of the Buddhist Newars there is no such restriction for the priest rather he is the one who gives instructions and enjoys the first place during feast. He gives instructions to the *Thākulai* who is assisted by the fellow male members, but it doesn’t mean females do not have any role in the *pūjā* ritual. It is compulsory that all the members gather and offer their *pūjā* during *Swan chāyegu* (offering of flowers to the god by the *Thākulai* while the priest is chanting the mantras). He is even allowed to have his part in the *Si Ka Bhoje* in which there are only eight spots and even the sons of the lineage do not get their share if there are more than seven households celebrating their *digu pūjā* together. In case of Hindu Newars they do not appoint any priest during their *digu pūjā*. One of my informants who has long been associated with the priestly work in Hindu Newar families recalls he never have performed the *digu pūjā* at either of his jajaman as a priest.²² The *pūjā* is

²¹ Prof. Rajendra Subedi et al, *Subedi Vamsabali*, Kathmandu: Subedi Kalyan Pratisthan, 2063 B.S., p.91

²² Interview with Baldev Juju, dated 2066-11-28

carried out by the head of the lineage. Though the participation is strictly restricted for any outsider, anyone can look at the *pūjā* rituals carried out at open field where the stone images of the lineage god is worshipped. It is only the *aagam devatā*, whose *pūjā* are carried out in a secret manner.

Another addition to the priest in most of the cases of the Non Newars is the presence and strong role of *Dhāmī* (Oracle) and which is not found among the Newars be it Hindu or Buddhist.²³ This *Dhāmī* is the one who has an important role to play throughout the event specially in Western part of Nepal. Before the main event in the evening he possess the lineage god and everyone gathers to listen what offering does the god want this time. Such act is called as *Dhāmī Patureko* and not only the members of a single lineage but all villagers gather there to listen what the god has to say. Not only this, if someone is ill they take this time to ask the god for the remedies. *Dhāmī* who is possessing God in that moment tells what the god wants in the *pūjā* rituals and the members take his sayings seriously as they prepare all the *pūjā* contents accordingly. After the completion of the *pūjā*, again in the next day again he does the same act i.e, possessing the lineage god and answering all the questions of the people gathered. He is now asked whether the lineage god is pleased with the offerings or not. Such act gives mental satisfaction to the people if he replies in positive. *Dhāmī* are chosen either from the family members or are hired during the *pūjā* season. The Ranas along with other caste who celebrate their *Kula pūjā* at Panchayani and Shahs who have settled here long before does not have this tradition of appointing *Dhāmī*, they simply appoint Brahmin priest specially of Aryal, Adhikari or Bhattarai caste. Nowadays the Brahmins and Chhetris who have started to celebrate their *Kula pūjā* here in the capital faces the difficulty to have *Dhāmī* who is well versed in possessing the god in him.

²³ Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, The Proof of the Bone: Lineage and Devali in Central Nepal, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Sage Publications, 1993, p.6

Another difference is the *Vāyu devatā* which is worshipped with equal importance in case of Non Newars²⁴ and this trend is not found among Newars. Though not exactly explained as the spiritual figure it seems this *Vāyu devatā* represents the souls of persons in the lineage who died in unnatural way i.e., accident, suicide, murdered etc. The souls of the persons who died in such a way are believed to roam around until it gets salvation by means of any religious act. So this special *pūjā*, just after the annual *Kula pūjā* for *Vāyu devatā* means the offering are for the souls of their late ancestors who died in unnatural way and thus became *Vāyu* (sprits). This *pūjā* for *Vāyu devatā* along with *Kula pūjā* makes a connection between the late ancestors and the present generation. During *Kula pūjā* the late ancestors who after the death are supposed to be rested in heaven are worshipped and the rest who still are roaming to get the eternal peace are offered *pūjā* as *Vāyu devatā*. Though no such concept of *Vāyu devatā* is found among the Newars, the Buddhist Newars of Kathmandu do perform the Sradhha in the name of late ancestors during the *Digu pūjā*. The sradhha performed this time is a different one as all the members of the lineage are present and the ritual performed are done in elaborate manner including all the names of the deceased persons in the lineage as far as could be traced. So this ritual can be taken as the binding link between the present generations with their late ancestors during the worship of lineage god.

Another feature of this *pūjā* is the restriction on particular food items which are considered as impure. The food items are more or less similar in both cases. The animal which is slaughtered in most of the case is a goat, with exception of Rana's and Shah's, who offer Sheep as Bali. Duck is also offered as Bali in many Buddhist Newar families during the second *digu pūjā* of the year. Cock is considered as impure to be offered as *Bali* during *digu pūjā* of Newars and *Kula pūjā* of Non Newars. It is called as Ku Panchi meaning the bad bird because it sometimes eats its own excreta.²⁵ The other food items such as onion, tomato, garlic etc are believed to develop the

²⁴ Interview with Girvan Shah

²⁵ Interview with Rajendra Man Bajracharya

tamo guna (angry nature) in human beings.²⁶ People should be calm and offer *pūjā* to the god with fresh mind, so the food which could change their nature is avoided during the entire *pūjā* period.

Newars always start their *pūjā* with *Dīp*, *Kalash* and Ganesha. In case of Newars this can be correlated with the Sukunda which is placed in the first spot during any auspicious *pūjā*. Sukunda is a metal piece with the image of Ganesha in the front below which is a small semi oval place which is used to place the cotton stick dipped in oil and lit as a lamp. There is a hollow space in the back which is used to put flowers that are offered to Ganesha. All these three combined to give a look of *Dīp*, *Kalash* and Ganesha at one place. Sukunda, this word is made up of two words- *Su* and *Kunda*. Both are Sanskrit words meaning a holy or good pond. *Su* is a prefix that is added to any word to give stress as best, eg- *Putra- Suputra*, *Kirti- Sukirti* etc while *kunda* is small holy pond or lake eg- Gosaikunda. In Sukunda the metal body is similar to shape of Kalash and thus the hollow portion in the back can be taken as space to put holy water. Though Newar culture historians have different thought about Sukunda and they do not like to compare it as the combined form of *Dīp*, *Kalash* and *Ganesh*. *Su* in Newari also means oil, so in their opinion Sukunda refers to the pond of oil and the hollow space in the back is made to store oil so that refilling of the lamp in the front is easier.²⁷ The new models of Sukunda made of silver also have a spoon like attachment for refilling the oil in the lamp, but this attachment is found mostly in the silver models only. The metal Sukunda which have been in use from ancient time does not have this attachment. Some Brahmin people also marked that the *Dīp*, *Kalash* and *Ganesh* that are placed at the first spot during any auspicious *pūjā* among them are placed without touching each other as there is a saying that both fire and

²⁶ Interview with Dinesh Raj Pant

²⁷ Hem raj Shakya, Sukunda, *Nepa Sanskritiya Mulukha* (Gateway to Nepal Culture), N.S. 1089, p.62

water should not touch each other as fire is extinguished by the water. So they are also little hesitant to accept Sukunda as a combination of the same.²⁸

Another notable difference is the involvement of females in the *pūjā* ceremony. In this case Newari women have lot more roles to play in comparison to their Non-Newar counterpart. Though Nepali families are considered as male dominated society, during *digu pūjā* of Newars there are certain rituals which are carried out by the females only. At first, among Non Newars participation of the females in the *pūjā* of their lineage god is limited to preparation of the *pūjā* materials and feast only while among Newars the both unmarried daughters and daughter in law gets similar status as the male members. The ritual to introduce newly married daughter in law and the new born son for the first time is carried out by the females only. Among Buddhist Newars, wife of the *Thākulai* have to perform the *sindur pūjā* in the beginning. There is no restriction for the girls at any level. Among Ranjitkars unmarried daughters even get “Si” regardless their sex but according to their age.²⁹ Among Brahmin and Chhetri the role of women is limited to preparing the necessary *pūjā* items. If married daughters are invited to join the *Kula pūjā* their participation is limited to the feast only and not in the main *pūjā*.³⁰

Among Ranas it is compulsory to take the liver of the sacrificed animal as main *Prasād*. The liver is first taken out from the animal and then offered to god in the sacred fire. After completion of all the *pūjā* it is taken as *Prasād* by the whole family. Even if someone is absent then the small amount of it is taken back home for them. Host family is responsible for this act of sending *Prasad* to those who by any reason could not come. This can be compared with the ritual of *Si Ka Bhoje* of Newars in which the certain parts of the sacrificed animal is taken as the main *Prasad* by the male members of the lineage along with the priest in some cases.

²⁸ Interview with Madhav Bhattarai, dated 2067-9-8

²⁹ Interview with Timila Ranjitkar

³⁰ Interview with Puskar Lohini

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

Nepal is rich in cultural diversity. Many different ethnicities add wealth to the varied societies here. However, when we talk about Kathmandu, it is mainly the Newari culture that is being referred to. Historian Baburam Acharya even opines that the Lichhavi ruler were also Newars.¹ This statement lacks solid proofs; nonetheless, the first Newari inscription clearly mentions the settlement of Newar people in the Kathmandu valley before early medieval period.² Even from that time to present, Newari culture has shown its impact in the culture of Kathmandu. Though we cannot trace the exact date when such ritual to worship the lineage god started, we still have many examples from ancient times when people had the tradition to worship the lineage god. Even in Hindu mythological books, we come across the terms lineage god and its worship. *Digu pūjā*, the worship of the lineage god, is one of the important aspects of Newari Culture. Especially, the Buddha margi Newars celebrate this ritual with great enthusiasm. But with the change of time and different opinions of the young generation, there has been a huge change in this ritual. People of different generations have different opinions about continuing this ritual. Mainly, the old generation does not want any change in the ritual while the new generation does not have any interest in continuing with the conventional regulations. In such situations, it is worthy to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of such ritual.

- 1 Cultural Identity: We cannot ignore the fact that if our country has maintained its different identity, it is because of its rich culture and festivals related with it. If the community wants to keep this tradition intact, it needs to save its culture. With the change in time and in the name of modernization, many rituals have become extinct but the Newars have

¹ Baburam Acharya, *Prachinkal ko Nepal* (Ancient Nepal), Srikrishna Acharya, 2060 B.S. p. 154-55

² Prem Shanti Tuladhar, *Nepal Bhasa Sahitya ya Itihaas* (History of Newari Language and Literature), Ye : Nepal Bhasa Academy, 1120 N.S. p. 13

continued with so many rituals thus helping to save the culture of the country. *Digu pūjā*, which they celebrate every year, is one of them. This ritual shows the devotion of these people towards religion, god and the traditional values. During *digu pūjā*, all the members strictly follow the decision of the head of the lineage. This shows the respect that the community gives to its elders. The head of the lineage too takes fair decisions. Elder people are not allowed to perform heavy works; this is done by the young ones.

Additionally, the songs or *Dāphā Bhajans* that are sung during *digu pūjā*, and the musical instruments that are used for this occasion - also help to save the cultural Newari musical instruments.

- 2 Social Interaction among the members: As people now opt to live in nuclear families, such occasions become the ideal time for family gathering. In many cases where there are many families, it is quite possible that people might not know each other. This occasion helps people to know the family members from their lineage. It is compulsory to participate in the *pūjā* of the lineage god. Hence, Newars make their presence in the ceremony and take the blessings of the lineage god. Especially kids enjoy this atmosphere the most. They have little knowledge about the god and other *pūjā* rituals. They take this occasion as just to wear new clothes, play and enjoy the gathering of the members of the extended family. But at the same time, they do also observe the rituals and learn gradually about their responsibilities towards their family and lineage.
- 3 Self-reliant: As the participation is limited to family members only, all the necessary arrangements for the *pūjā* ceremony are arranged by the family members. This shows the independent nature of the Newari people. In the past, the income from the assets that were kept for the continuation for the *pūjā* ceremony was enough to carry on the five day long *digu pūjā*

smoothly. From arranging *pūjā* materials to the preparation of feast, they do it by themselves and this too helps in minimizing the expenses for the same.

Despite all these facts there require some corrections regarding on procedures of the ritual.

1. Limit on consumption of Alcohol: During any Newari festival, it is compulsory to offer alcohol and homemade beer to god. It is also mentioned in several books that even the gods and the Brahmin people used to take *Somras* during Vedic period.³ Many people opine that the term *Somras* here can be compared with present day alcohol, while it is even said that *Somras* was a kind of juice less toxic than alcohol. Even the Buddha margi Newars offers alcohol and homemade beer to god. As *prasād* of the god, they consumed it also and there was no limitation to such activities. Rift aroused over very minor issues which sometimes became difficult to solve and thus created misunderstandings. This drinking habit created such a violent environment even in a pure *pūjā* ceremony.
2. Family feud: Though *digu pūjā* is taken as an occasion of meeting family members of an extended family, sometimes it works in an adverse manner. This happens because of different status of the participating families. It is quite obvious that the economic status of all the families is not equal. The rich ones take this as a time to show their wealth - wearing nice clothes and jewelry while the ones who cannot afford the same, feel humiliated. Clash of opinions eventually leads to the breakup of the group.
3. Dissociation by other castes: A jyapu is appointed to carry the *pūjā* items in his traditional basket- *khamhu*, to the *pūjā* site and back to the host

³ Dr. Ganesh Prasad Chhetri and Som Prasad Khatiwada, *Hindu Samaj ra Dharma* (Hindu Society and Religion), Biratnagar : Siva Prakashan, 2054 B.S., p. 9

house. Jogi plays *muwālī* and leads the procession. They were also entitled to get their share during the *Śradhha* of the late ancestors. Nai or Nau (in upper castes) have roles in purification rituals. Bajracharya priest performs the religious *pūjās*. However, nowadays, Jogi and Nai have completely stopped to perform such activities as they have been warned by their concerned organizations not to participate in such occasions which would portray them as untouchables. Jogi, after leading the procession, has to remain just outside the *pūjā* site all day. As for Nai, she cuts the toe nails of the female members a day before the main *pūjā*. After she leaves, the house is cleaned. Not only these people even Jyapus have stopped carrying the *pūjā* materials. So nowadays people have started carrying the necessary *pūjā* items in a car or rented taxis. This has diminished the charm of the procession.

4. Gender Issues: Though Nepali society, as a whole, is affected by this male dominating issue; and Newar society is not an exception to this issue. Apart from participation in the *pūjā* ceremony and certain rituals performed by the female head they don't have any other major role to play in the event. Female participation in *Kula Pūjā* of non-Newars is very low in comparison to Newars, so in that case Newar society is somewhat liberal about this. Among Shahs and Ranas, it is obligatory to offer one sheep for *bali* (sacrifice) - if a son is born in the lineage, or if he gets married, or even if he gets his first job; whereas, no such offering are made in case of a daughter. But still some of the rituals during *digu pūjā* depict the superior position of the male. First, only male members can represent the family regardless of their age. For example, if in a family the grandchild is the only male member with his mother and grandmother alive, then he will represent his family in certain rituals regardless of his age just because he is a son.

During *Si Ka Bhoye*, where certain parts of the sacrificed animal are distributed as *Prasād*, only male members are entitled to get the *Prasād*. In some rare cases, where the number of male members is very low, then according to seniority order, certain parts are distributed among the female members as well. While doing so, widows are excluded from the list. But in most of the cases the remaining *Si* are again distributed among the male members.

In most of the Newar families, the ritual for formal entrance in the *digu pūjā* guthi is observed only for male child. A boy can go through his coming of age ceremony during *Digu pūjā* while there is no such provision for a female child.⁴

For a widow, her participation in the *digu pūjā* is just limited to the feast. She cannot participate in any auspicious rituals, while for a male this condition does not apply. Even a widower enjoys his position as head of the lineage and performs the entire rituals.

From the above discussions, it is quite clear that the ritual to worship the lineage god is quite important among Newars. It is the way to express the solidarity in practical way as all the families belonging to the same lineage participate in this ritual. For the last hundreds of years, people have been following this culture for the prosperous future of the family members and it is the prime duty of the present generation to preserve this unique culture of Newars.

Recommendations

With the change in time, people have found lot of difficulties to continue with this century old tradition, but we are responsible to minimize such difficulties and give

⁴ Though it is believed that the ritual of *Ihi* is completed after offering certain items used by the girl such as *Sala Pā*, *Ihi Mo* etc to the lineage god, but the ritual of *Ihi* is not observed during *digu pūjā*.

continuation to this ritual. As positive and negative aspects of this ritual have been already discussed, we should look at the negative aspects and try to minimize it while stress should be given to positive aspects. On one hand, this *pūjā* unifies the members of a single lineage and develops the feeling of togetherness; while on the other hand, there are plenty of examples where misunderstandings arose amongst family members during the same *pūjā* ceremony. So, following are some suggestions which might be applied to make this ritual more convenient and popular among the young generation and make them rethink about giving continuation to this unique culture to the next generation.

1. Duration of the *pūjā*: The long duration of the *pūjā* is one of the many issues that are making it unpopular among the young generation. The five-day long celebrations in this modern age seem to be difficult for everyone. Because of the busy lifestyle, it is difficult to arrange time continuously for five whole days. Citing this fact, people have already started making changes in this regard. Most of the families have opted to limit the *pūjā* ceremony for three days. They have stopped celebrating the last day parting feast. Even the *śraddha* performed in the memory of the late ancestors is done in simple manner involving one or two representatives from each family instead of whole family members. But this is not enough. The *pūjā* should be performed sincerely whether it is done for a day or couple of days. If we can make it a single day affair, then it is possible that most of the members would take part in the event and perform their duty.
2. Simplicity in the rules: Not only during *digu pūjā* but during other occasions also, the rules and regulations that a Newar goes through seems to be very difficult. More than that, the senior members are unwilling to change any rules. This again becomes a major point for discontinuation of such rituals. For example, all the *pūjā* are carried out by the senior most male head of the family. Until the completion of the *pūjā*, he along with all

other members should remain empty stomach. The head person must be an elderly person; to remain empty stomach might create adverse effect in his health. So care should be taken in this regard- those who cannot remain empty stomach for a long time should be allowed to eat.

The specific items that is necessary for the *pūjā* is another aspect which needs modifications. As there is scarcity of such items, people have to pay a lot more than the actual price. One who sells it also knows that the buyer can afford a lot as it is compulsory to have those items for *pūjā*. Simple rules should be made in such cases and if we want this ritual to continue for a long time, then we should look for alternatives.

3. Superstitions: It obviously feels good when we know what we have offered has been accepted but it is not the same when such superstitions suggest that our *pūjā* has not been accepted or god is not pleased with our offering. It is taken as inauspicious if the crow does not accept the feast. The host family is always in pressure to maintain the purity during the preparation of the *pūjā* materials. Also during *pūjā*, if the *Mohni Sinha* (back tika) is not collected abundantly, it is regarded as unlucky. Not only Newars, in Gurung community also, they have rituals in which they look at the shape and veins of the liver of the sacrificed animal and make predictions for future. Such things create lots of pressure in the mind of people and builds negative feelings. *Pūjā* should be performed without any negative feelings. Some groups even have started taking a bronze crow along with them and make offering to it while some have wooden jackals. In some other instances, families just leave one portion of feast to the crow and do not wait for a crow to come. It has become quite necessary to adopt such changes for the continuation of this ritual.
4. The government policy about the Land Act also has made certain impact in most of the *guthis* which have land as its asset. One of the reasons for the

discontinuation of this ritual is financial aspect. The lands which were kept for its smooth run were declared as private and the ownership was divided equally between the owner and the *Mohi* (tiller). Lands were sold as there was no other option than selling it. Because of the decreasing interest rates that the Banks provide for amounts deposited, and also the uncertainty of the finance companies, these could not be taken as good alternatives. If possible, lands which are kept for such *guthis* should not be privatized so that *Mohi* can work and give certain portion as *Bāli* to the owner from which the owner can smoothly run the *guthi*.

5. Excessive use of alcohol in such *pujās* should be restricted. Especially the younger generation should show their concern towards such issues.
6. Though most of the families have opted to offer alternatives for animal *Bali*, still it is in use in many families. At one hand it drives heavy criticism while on other hand it increases the cost. Families who still practice animal sacrifice should think about alternatives rather sooner.
7. In some cases, occasions like *digu pūjā* are taken as a place and time to show off the wealth by wealthy families. For successful continuation of such rituals, mutual cooperation is much needed which is not possible if participating families indulge in showing off such things.
8. According to changing trends it is now essential to show more consideration while accepting inter caste marriage. In some families there are only old aged people participating in such *pūjā* activities as they have not accepted daughter in laws from other castes.
9. Gender favoritism is not limited only in Newars. But still, at such events, equal respect should be given to both sons and daughters. Widows should not be neglected and they also should be encouraged to participate in auspicious occasions.

Appendix – A

Dāphā Bhajans

राग-कोला

अथिर थ्व शरीर छाया निदानस

याय् परउपकार ॥धु॥

अति हरसनं दवाव रस नं

थव हित थमनं वोनाव

वने उभानसं चोने म्हिताव रस

अनेग स्वान स्वयाव ॥१॥

अति तव वीर जुसे चोन वल हीन

शरीर अतिनं गनाव

वालक गर्भन पिकया वेदनानं

प्राण मलेनिथेचोन ॥२॥

खनाव अन अति करणा उत्पति

जुयाव मन हिलाव

छवयाव हसे लित दक थव हित

वनाव थम याकतन ॥३॥

दको शरीरया तोथाव तिलहिल

खायाव सिमाया च्वकासं

वनाव वया थास कियाव गलस

भोग विल थव मांस ॥४॥

जनम जनमसं याकगु धरमनं

जुलयो सुगत नाम

ल्हाकम्हया थुलि फुतकि पाप गुलि

विहुने शरण छि पालि ॥५॥

(स्रोत : ठहिटी मानन्धर गुठीमा रहेको दाफा म्ये संग्रह (हस्तलिखित), पृ. २६-२७)

(Source: Manuscript titled “*dāphā mye sangraha*” (collection of *dāphā* songs) preserved at Thahiti Manandhar Guthi, p. 26-27)

(This *Dāphā bhajan* is based on the *Jātaka* story in which a prince sacrifices his life to save the life of a tigress, who was about to die after giving birth to cubs. This song is sung during the *digu pūjā* of Manandhars. The story of the prince goes like this: A royal prince goes to the forest for entertainment with his attendants. He sees a tigress about to die because of pain and hunger after giving birth to her cubs. The prince orders his attendants to return and himself cuts his own flesh to feed the tigress thus saving her life. The tigress survives but the prince dies.

The motto of this *Dāphā bhajan* is: work for the welfare of the other even at the cost of yourself)

राग-रामकली

सकल पीठया मूल माता जोगिनी
नाचथ श्री जोगाम्बर स ॥८॥

उतर दिगसं विष्णमति तिरसं
आनन्द म्हेपीया चोसं ज्ञानेश्वरी ॥९॥

कमलया वन ख्वाल तेज अति सुर्ज ज्वर
मफु ल्याय् छिगु अवतार ज्ञानेश्वरी ॥१०॥

देवलोकयाआस उद्धार जयगु थास
भक्तया थास अति दया ज्ञानेश्वरी ॥११॥

ल्याकम्ह शरण थास छि पाली निपाया कोसं
प्रतापसिंह निस्ते ल्हाल ज्ञानेश्वरी ॥१२॥

(स्रोत : ठहिटी मानन्धर गुठीमा रहेको दाफा म्ये संग्रह (हस्तलिखित), पृ. ३०-३१)

(Source: Manuscript titled “*dāphā mye sangraha*” (collection of *dāphā* songs) preserved at Thahiti Manandhar Guthi, p. 30-31)

(This *Dāphā bhajan* is full of praise for *Mhaipi Azimā* and was composed during the reign of King Pratap Singh Shah. This song is popular among the Newars whose Kul devatā is *Mhaipi Azimā*. This goddess is considered as the chief of all goddesses and is famous as *Yogāmbara Gyaneshwari*. Situated in the Mhaipi hill on the bank of Bishnumati river this goddess have bright face which can be compared to the rays of sun. She protects the people from the evil spirit and no one can accurately describe the power and strength of this goddess)

राग-रामकली

जय माई जोगाम्बर जगत जननी
त्रिभुवन हितकारणी

(हाँदै) तीन लोकके हरत करत तुम
भूक्ति मुक्ति वरदायणीमाता
उत्तर खण्डमेनदिया किनारामे
जंगल बीचय् शोभायमान

(हाँदै) आदि पीठके मणि असुर संहारणी
निरंजन आनन्द स्वरूपिनी

(स्रोत : ठहिटी मानन्धर गुठीमा रहेको दाफा मये संग्रह (हस्तलिखित), पृ. ३०)

(Source : Manuscript titled “*dāphā mye sangraha*” (collection of *dāphā* songs) preserved at Thahiti Manandhar Guthi, p. 30)

(This *Dāphā bhajan* is in mixed languages of Maithali and Newari. This *Dāphā bhajan* is an another example of the greatness of *Mhaipi Azimā* who is described as the protector of human being. *Mhaipi Azimā* is described as the protector of the entire universe viz - heaven, earth and the infernal region (*pātāla*) with a power to give boon or curse to people on the basis of their merits. Situated at the bank of Bishnumati river and in the middle of the forest, she is the chief of all the goddesses, killer of the wicked demon and a symbol of glory and happiness.

राग-स्वरथ

गंगामाई निर्मल लख फूति विज्याक रथसं दनाव ॥धु॥

प्येंगुली दिशा सनवल द्यो खिउंसे
वचुगु सुपाचन भनन ननन वरषा नं. जुयकाव ...॥१॥

मनुष्यया गति अति निर्मल लख फूति
भूमि सं जुस्य चोन लख हिलाव करुणानं स्वयाव ॥२॥

ब्रह्म, विष्णु महेश्वर इन्द्र भगवान
दयाचोकं देवलोक देवदेवी चन्द्र सूर्य सहित नं. ... ॥३॥

प्रतिपाल याव छिन अज्ञानीया मन तिव
याहुन्हे जगत उद्धार कोटी कोटी ल्हाकम्हया विनति ... ॥४॥

(स्रोत : ठहिटी मानन्धर गुठीमा रहेको दाफा मये संग्रह (हस्तलिखित), पृ. ४९-५०)

(Source: Manuscript titled “*dāphā mye sangraha*” (collection of *dāphā* songs) preserved at Thahiti Manandhar Guthi, p. 49-50)

(This *Dāphā bhajan* is an appeal to Ganga (goddess of rain) to cause rain for good harvest and welfare of people. Ganga first comes as clouds, makes the atmosphere dark and finally causes the rainfall for the benefit of all the human beings. Since the song is about asking for a good rainfall it is sung only during *Mu digu pūjā* as final day of this season marks the beginning of the rainy season)

राग-मालश्री

कालिका जग इश्वरी ॥ गलस मुण्ड माला न्हसस कुण्डल
हेला मानिकया माला रे ॥ध्रु॥
शीर सं कर ज्वं से मि फुति यात ले नं
असुर फुत कुम्ह इश्वरी ॥
भूत वेताल गण जोगिनी दको अन
आनन्द जुल परमेश्वरी ॥१॥

मुकुट लोक अति भीन व अनु गुटी
जोगिनी विकट भयंकरी ॥
ल्हाकम्ह नरपति विहुने शुभगति
चरण शरण गुहेश्वरी ॥२॥

(स्रोत : ठहिटी मानन्धर गुठीमा रहेको दाफा मये संग्रह (हस्तलिखित), पृ. २४)

(Source : Manuscript titled “*dāphā mye sangraha*” (collection of *dāphā* songs) preserved at Thahiti Manandhar Guthi, p. 24)

(This *Dāphā bhajan* is dedicated to goddess *Kālī*, who is the killer of *Asuras* and protector of people. The goddess is described in a violent form to kill the demon. She wears human skulls around her neck; kundal (earring) in her ears and also a necklace of diamond and ruby. She kills the demon with her weapon (trishul) and sword within a blink of eyes. Worshipped as *Guheswari*, the *kālī* protects thousands of her devotees)

Appendix – B

Appendix – C

Glossary

S.N	Newari word	Meaning
1.	Āgama	Secret and sacred place for the family god
2.	Āgama cuka	Court yard reserved for the family god
3.	Ailā	Homemade liquor
4.	Ajimā	Mother goddess specially Harati
5.	Ala	Red colour paint used in feet by Newar women during auspicious occasions
6.	Ārwā	Colourful cotton strings interwoven in a small wooden stick
7.	Āsana	Seating place
8.	Avalokiteśwara	Name of a Buddhist deity
9.	Bali	Offering of animal to the god
10.	Bālī	Portion of production which a tiller is bound to pay for the land lord.
11.	Bārḥā	12 day long ritual for a Newar girl marking the beginning of her puberty.
12.	Bau pā	A saucer containing items offered to evil spirit
13.	Bāyegu bhoḃe	Literally meaning parting feast, observed on the last of the main <i>ḃigu pūjā</i>
14.	Bhinā masta	Children of daughter
15.	Bhuti	A kind of cereal
16.	Cacā	Religious songs performed by Bajracharyas
17.	Caipi	One of the dishes prepared from radish
18.	Catamari	A kind of traditional bread
19.	Caturthi	Fourth day of a <i>pakṣa</i>
20.	Chatra	Special umbrella made of colourful fabric used for gods
21.	Choyelā	Roasted buff meat

22.	Citlā	Figure of eye painted in a paper
23.	Cyatā ghasā	Eight dishes
24.	Dāphā mye	Traditional and religious hymn song among Newars, played during different religious events, one of them being <i>digu pūjā</i> . The participants sing the song/hymn with the help of musical instruments viz- <i>Khin, Tā, Babhu</i> .
25.	Dekhā	Newari word for dikṣyā
26.	Devatā	god
27.	Digu	Clan
28.	Digu khala	Grodup of families who performs Digu puṣā together
29.	Digu puṣā	Family god worship
30.	Dīkṣit	One who has obtained dikṣyā
31.	Dikṣā	A kind of secret ritual specially among the priest and high class Newars
32.	Dip	light
33.	Dipa	Funeral site
34.	Disi puṣā	Special puja performed by Bajracharyas
35.	Driṣṭi	Symbol of eye made of silver
36.	Dyo	Newari word for god
37.	Fasi	Pumkin
38.	Gajur	Top most part of a temple, pinnacle
39.	Ghya kasti	Mixture of ghee and honey
40.	Grihastha āṣram	One out of four āṣram as according to Hindu Dharmasastra
41.	Guongu nya	Sacred fish used specially in puṣā
42.	Guthi	Trust
43.	Hifa dyo	Gods who accept animal sacrifice
44.	Himafa dyo	Gods who does not accept animal sacrifice

45.	Ihi	A ritual symbolizing marriage of a Newar girl with god represented by bel fruit performed at young age
46.	Iṣṭa devatā	Clan or family god
47.	Kalaś	Sacred jug
48.	Kasu	A king of cereal
49.	Kaulā	First meal of the day
50.	Kaulā bo	Food reserved for deceased person
51.	Kawo	Group
52.	Khaipi	One of the dishes prepared from raddish
53.	Khat	Metal or wooden chariot
54.	Khaye	A kind of sacred drink taken as Prasad
55.	Khele	Open place where the stone image of the lineage god is placed
56.	Kikimpā	Head ornament made of silver offered to god
57.	Kislī	Rice , coin and nut place in a small earthen bowl used as special offering to god
58.	Kolāgha	Second day of main digu pūjā
59.	Kṣma Puja	A puja performed in a small scale instead of the main puja.
60.	Kul	Clan
61.	Kul devatā	Nepali word for family god
62.	Kul puja	Traditional worship of the family god
63.	Kulāyani	Traditional
64.	La cā puja	Puja performed certain days prior to the main puja so as to arrange things for the upcoming event, found among certain groups of Manandhars of Kathmandu
65.	Lākhāmarī	A kind of Newari sweet, specially important during marriage
66.	Lu dyo	Golden image of the god
67.	Makacā	Small earthen plate used during Monī phayegu ritual

68.	Marcā	Item necessary for making homemade beer
69.	Mashan pujā	Pujā at the funeral site
70.	Matsyendranāth	God of Rain and Prosperity
71.	Mhya masta	Married daughters
72.	Misā bhoje	Feast among Tuladhars involving females only
73.	Moh mā	Necklace of golden coins
74.	Monī phayegu	Ritual in which the carbon of the light is collected in a small earthen bowl and later used as tika
75.	Monī sinha	Black tika collected from Monī phayegu ritual
76.	Mukut	crown
77.	Musyā	Soyabean
78.	Muwālī	Flute like musical instrument
79.	Nachā digu puja	Semi major pujā of the lineage god
80.	Nakha	Festival
81.	Nitya pujā	Daily worship
82.	Nya digu pujā	Optional pujā of the lineage god
83.	Nyaga sonā pujā	Special pujā among Tuladhars
84.	Pālu	Ginger
85.	Pānjus	Priests of Machindranath
86.	Phukī	Clan members
87.	Pujā ku	A bundle of pujā items
88.	Sakhwā cun	Lime powder
89.	Salā pā	An earthen bowl used during Ihi
90.	Sattu	Millet flour
91.	Sija	Copper

92.	Sika bhu	Ritual in which the certain parts of the sacrificed animal is distributed specially to the male members
93.	Sika bo	Portion of feast for the late ancestors
94.	Sipha luyegu	Ritual performed while welcoming a new member or at other occasions for a healthy life
95.	Sithī nakha	Final day of digu pujā season
96.	Sona pujā	Tantric puja performed by Bajracharya priest
97.	Śradha	Death anniversary
98.	Śukla	Full moon pakṣya
99.	Sukundā	Light pot with an image of Ganesh
100.	Swā chāyegu	Offering of flowers to the god
101.	Swāri	A king of Newari bread
102.	Syabajī	Flattened and fried beaten rice
103.	Syucā	Red colour clay
104.	Thākulī	Head of the family or clan
105.	Thākulī naki	Wife of the Thākulī
106.	Thāpī	Metal container
107.	Tho	Homemade beer
108.	Thokīn	Portion of rice contributed from each households for the production of homemade beer
109.	Thūnā	Nose of sacrificed animal
110.	Tūta	Religious chant, form of Sanskrit word śtrota
111.	Waucā	Green vegetables
112.	Wo	Newari pancake
113.	Yogāmbār	Another name for Mhepi
114.	Yomarī	Newari sweet dish with inner filling of caramel

Appendix - D

List of Interviewees

1. Amar Pant – Retired Lieut.General
2. Anand Khadgi – Local resident of Chhetrapati
3. Ashok Bajracharya – Priest
4. Bala Dev Juju – Rajopadhyay priest & Writer
5. Bhailal Darshandhari – One of the senior member of Darshandhari family
6. Bijay Dhoj Joshi – Former General Secretary, Sanatan Ista Devata Guthi, Maru
7. Chandra Bahadur Mali – Local resident of Kirtipur, member in Mask dancing, performs as Ganesha
8. Chandra Man Nakarmi – Local resident of Kirtipur, in his family puja related with lineage god worship was revived after a long gap by his father
9. Chandra Putuwar – Local resident of Halchowk
10. Chunu Rajak – Thakuli (head) of lainchour Rajak group
11. Daman Shakya – Local resident of Naghal
12. Dharma Maharjan – Administrative Official, Tribhuvan University
13. Dilip Khadgi – Member Nāya Samaj
14. Dinesh Raj Pant – Retd. Professor, Nepal Sanskrit University
15. Girvan Shah- Retired army colonel
16. Gyan Ratna Bajracharya – Priest
17. Gyani Bahadur Karranjit - Local resident of Jaisidewal
18. Hari Bahadur Karranjit - Local resident of Jaisidewal, also worked at District Education Office
19. Indra Bahadur Chitrakar- Senior most member in Chitrakar Group, Age- 92 yrs
20. Dr. Jagman Gurung – Director, Research Center, Nepal Sanskrit University
21. Janak lal Vaidya – Retd. Professor of Tribhuvan University
22. Julum Maharjan – Local resident of Kirtipur, His family celebrates their annual lineage god worship during Nov-Dec (exceptional time period for such celebration)
23. Kashi Nath Tamot – Retired associate professor

24. Dr. Keshab Man Shakya – President, Nepa Rastriya Party, Former Minister of Science and Technology
25. Dr. Khadga Man Shrestha - Former Registrar Lumbini Buddhist University
26. Krishna Rajak – Son of Chunu Rajak
27. Kunjarika Ranjitkar – Member of Ranjitkar group, above 80 yrs
28. Laxmi Kumari Dharshandhari – wife of Bhailal Darshandhari
29. Laxmi Narayan Dyola – Local resident of Khicha Pokhari
30. Madan Chitrakar – Painter and teacher
31. Dr. Madhav Bhattarai – President, Panchanga Nirnayak Samiti
32. Maila Maharjan – Local resident of Samakhushi
33. Manik Lal Shrestha – Professor of Nepal Bhasa Department, Tribhuvan University
34. Maya Rana - housewife
35. Nhuchhe Narayan Maharjan – member of maharjan group which still celebrates their lineage god puja in elaborate form as it used to be.
36. Padam Karranjit- Member, Karranjit Society
37. Padam Shrestha – journalist, writer of few books in Newari language related with Newars and their culture
38. Dr. Pancha Maharjan – CNAS, Tribhuvan University.
39. Dr. Pitambar Lal Yadav- Registrar, Lumbini Buddhist University
40. Prem Hira Tuladhar – Associate Professor,
41. Prem Shanti Tuladhar – Retd. Professor, Nepal Bhasa Kendriya Bibhag, Patan M. Campus
42. Prithu N. Mali – 85 years, one of the senior citizen, had participated in sword exchanging ritual with the King as Pachali Bhairava
43. Puskar Lohini – President Lohini Samaj
44. Puspa Kumar Rajak- Local Resident of Lainchour
45. Rajan Shakya – Local resident of Naghal
46. Rajendra Man Bajracharya – President, Bajrayaan Mahasangh
47. Riddhi Baba Pradhan – Daughter in law of Pradhan family of Bhagwan Bahal, also worked as Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Nepal Government, at present Minister
48. Dr. Safalya Amatya – Former Director General, Department of Archaeology, Nepal

49. Satya Mohan Joshi- Renown cultural historian
50. Satya Narayan Dangol – Member of dangol group who has now separated from guthi related with lineage god worship
51. Shankha Bir Putuwar – Member Putuwar Association
52. Subarna Man Tuladhar – Retd. Official of Nepal Administrative Staff Collage
53. Surya Man Karranjit – Retired associate professor at Tribhuvan University
54. Dr. Triratna Manandhar – Retd. Professor of History, Tribhuvan University

Appendix - E

Question Set No. 1

1. As appointment of a priest by a particular family helps in deciding which faith they follow, can you name the castes in which you have performed *pūjā* rituals as a priest.
2. What are the differences (if there is any) in the lineage god worship *guthi* among these castes?
3. As Rajopadhyay is a priestly caste, who performs priestly rituals while conducting your *digu pūjā*?
4. What are the differences in *puja* rituals carried out by Maithali Brahmins and Rajopadhyay?
5. Both Saiva and Buddhist Newars have the tradition of worshipping their lineage god. Is there any theoretical difference in *pūjā* rituals among these two groups?
6. Among Saiva Newars can you name out some of the god or goddesses worshipped as lineage god by these people?
7. How long can we trace the history of animal *bali*? What are the differences you have experienced in this ritual?
8. How Saiva Newars perform *Sikā Bhu* (ritual performed after animal *bali*)?
9. In a newar society in any auspicious occasion giving sagun is must and during *digu pūjā* also sagun is given to the god. Your opinion about this ritual and its importance.
10. Among Buddhist Newars though not directly linked with the *pūjā* rituals, there is involvement of other castes also during *digu pūjā*. Do Saiva Newars also have such traditions?

प्रश्न सेट नं. १

(प्रश्नावली सेट १ को नेपाली अनुवाद)

१. तपाईंका जजमानहरू कुन कुन जातका नेवारहरू हुन ?
२. ती जजमानहरूको देवाली गुठी एकै प्रकार वा भिन्दा भिन्दै ?
३. राजोपाध्यायहरूको देवाली पूजानको विधिविधान र उनीहरूको पूरोहित को ?
४. मैथली ब्राह्मण र राजोपाध्यायहरूले गराउने पूजामा भिन्नता ?
५. हिन्दु नेवार र बौद्ध नेवारको कुलदेवता पूजामा सैद्धान्तिक भिन्नता के छ ?
६. हिन्दु नेवारमध्ये कुन जातीले कु कुन देवतालाई कुलदेवताको रूपमा मान्ने गर्दछन् ?
७. पूजामा बलि प्रथाको चलन पहिले र अहिले
८. सगुन (संग) र सिका भु ।
९. हिन्दु नेवारहरूका कुल देवता पूजामा अरू जातीका नेवारहरूको संलग्नता
१०. कुलदेवता पूजाविधि - शुरुदेखि अन्तसम्म

Question Set No. 2

1. How do you define *digu pūjā*?
2. The concept of lineage god is found in old mythological books also, what is your opinion about the concept of lineage god?
3. *Digu pūjā* or *degu pūjā*. Which one is correct and Why?
4. Among Newars there is a specific time period when this *digu pūjā* is performed, can you figure out some of the reasons behind this period?
5. Most of the Buddha margi Newars celebrate their *digu pūjā* in open fields where one can found imageless stones worshipped as lineage god where as the main shrine of the lineage god is somewhere else. Do Saiva Newars follow the same tradition or it is different in their case?
6. Duration of the *pūjā* ceremony?
7. Meaning of the word “*Kolāgha*”
8. How many times in one year do you celebrate your *digu pūjā*?
9. After the ritual of *Thākulai luyegu* the eldest male member is entitled to perform all the *pūjā* rituals during *digu pūjā*. Such case is found among many Buddha Margi Newar families. Do Saiva Margi Newars also have such ritual? Do they need their priest to perform rituals during *digu pūjā* or the eldest male member performs the rituals?
10. Which animal is chosen to offer as *bali* during *digu pūjā*? If you celebrate your *digu pūjā* more than once in a year then the animal chosen for Bali is same in all cases or not? Is *bali* offered to the main lineage god or not? If not, is *bali* offered to some other god like Ganesh? Bhairab? Which one? Why is it so, your opinion? Do you have tradition of *Sikā Bhoye*, a follow up ritual of *bali*?

11. Do you have tradition of offering the first portion of the feast to either crow or any other animal during *digu pūjā*? If yes, are you following it up to now or have changes in this ritual? If there are changes what are the changes and how you first initiated the process of change?
12. What are the specific *pūjā* items required for this *pūjā* which you don't use during other *pūjā*? Do you use *driṣṭi*, *citlā*, *ārwa* ? How difficult is it to find these items? Have you made any changes for this?
13. One of the important feature of *sonā pūjā* is the black tika called *mohni* in Newari, many Buddha margi Newars are following this tradition during *digu pūjā* also. How about Saiva Newars? Do you perform *sonā pūjā* during *digu pūjā*?
14. This black tika if is not formed abundantly, is taken as inauspicious, also in families where the first portion of the feast is offered to crow it is inauspicious if the crow does not come instantly, what do you think? Do you think such superstitions are making this ritual more unpopular among the young generation?
15. The female head of the lineage- *thākulai naki* puts the *sindūr* to all the girls and also offers the same to the god with her left hand, why she uses her left hand when only right hand is used to do all the other *pūjā*?
16. The tradition of taking “*Khay*” just after completion of *pūjā* is found among only Buddha margi Newars only or Shiva margi Newars also follow this? What is the significance of this ritual?
17. What are the food items that you don't take during the entire duration of *digu pūjā*? Can you give reasons for why these things are forbidden to take?
18. How newlywed daughter in law are introduced for the first time in this *pūjā*? Do you have any formal ritual for this during *digu pūjā*? Only daughter in law or newly born child also have to perform this ritual to get formal entrance to the *pūjā* ceremony?
19. How long a married daughter is eligible to participate in this ritual?

20. Do you have any ornaments of the lineage god? If yes, can you name them?
21. Is there any participation of other caste in your *digu pūjā*? If yes who are they and what roles do they play during *digu pūjā*?
22. Do you use *Sukundā*? In your opinion can it be compared with or taken as a combined form of the *Dīp*, *Kalash* and Ganesh that Non Newars usually worship during any auspicious occasion?
23. Do you perform “*Śrāddha*” ritual during *digu pūjā*?
24. Your view about gender discrimination and the superiority of male during this ritual.
25. How do you decide the host family? Is it in rotation basis or all the families equally support to celebrate this ritual? If only single family is given responsibility as host family then what is the role that other families play?
26. Do you have any source of income to celebrate this *pūjā*? If yes, what are the sources? Is it enough to carry out rituals in smoother way? If no, how do you manage?

प्रश्न सेट नं. २

(प्रश्नावली सेट २ को नेपाली अनुवाद)

१. दिगु पूजाको परिभाषा कसरी गर्नु हुन्छ ?
२. धार्मिक ग्रन्थहरूमा पनि कुलदेवताको उल्लेख गरिएको पाइन्छ, तपाईंको विचारमा कुलदेवताको अवधारणा के छ ?
३. दिगु पूजा या देगु पूजा ?
४. नेवारहरूले प्रायः दिगु पूजा बैशाख-जेठ महिनामा मनाउने गर्दछन्, यहि समयमा मनाउनुको केही कारण ?
५. बौद्ध मार्गी नेवारहरूमा खुला स्थान 'ख्य' मा गएर दिगु पूजा मनाउने चलन छ, वैश मार्गीहरू कहाँ आफ्नो देगु पूजा मनाउँछन् ?
६. देगु पूजाको अवधि
७. कोलाधः को अर्थ
८. वर्षको कति पटक देगु पूजा मनाउनु हुन्छ ?
९. 'थाकुली लुयग' चलन शैव नेवारमा छ ? देगु पूजा थाकुली वा पुरोहित कस्ले गर्ने ?
१०. देगु पूजामा के के बलि दिइन्छ ? सिका भव्य गर्ने चलन छ कि छैन ? बलि कुलदेवता वा अरू कुनै देवतालाई दिइन्छ ?
११. पहिलो भाग काग वा अरू कुनै जनावरलाई दिने चलन छ कि छैन ? छ भने पहिले र अहिलेमा केही भिन्नता छ ?
१२. दृष्टि, चित्तला, आर वा पूजा गर्दा चाहिन्छ ?
१३. सोनेगु पूजा गरेर मोनी थाप्ने चलन छ ?
१४. मोनी टिका नराम्रो आउमा, काग नआएमा पूजा राम्रो नभएको विश्वास गरिन्छ । अहिलेका युवापुस्ता माझ यो पूजाले यस्तै कारणले लोकप्रियता गुमाएको हुन सक्छ ?
१५. थाकुली नकिले पूजा गर्दा देब्रे हातले किन गरिन्छ ?

१६. 'खाय्' किन खाने गरिन्छ ? शैव नेवारमा पनि यो चलन छ ?
१७. देगु पूजा अवधिभर के के खानेकुरा बर्जित छन् ?
१८. देगु पूजामा बुहारी, छोरा, छोरी भित्र्याउने चलन छ ?
१९. विवाहित छोरीले आफ्नो माइतको देगु पूजामा जान पाउँछ/पाउँदैन ?
२०. कुलदेवताको गहनाहरू राख्ने चलन छ/छैन ?
२१. अरू जातका मानिसहरू को के कस्तो सहभागिता हुन्छ ?
२२. सुकुन्दालाई दिप, कलश, गणेशको एकीकृत स्वरूप भन्न सकिन्छ ?
२३. देगु पूजाका दौरान श्राद्धको चलन छ ?
२४. देगु पूजामा देखिने लैङ्गिक विभेद र पुरुष प्रधानताको बारेमा तपाईंको विचार ?
२५. देगु पूजामा पाला: को व्यवस्था
२६. पूजा चलाउन कुनै आयश्रोतको व्यवस्था छ ? अहिलेसम्म त्यो पर्याप्त छ ? छैन भने कसरी व्यवस्था गर्नु हुन्छ ?

Question Set No. 3

1. Concept and importance of lineage god in Hindu culture.
2. What are the differences between *Kula Devatā* and *Iṣṭa Devatā*?
3. How long can we trace the history of *Kula Devatā* and *Iṣṭa Devatā*?
4. Among Non Newars along with *Kula Devatā* equal importance is given to *Vāyu Devatā* especially among Shahs'. As a priest can you make it more clear about the concept of this *Vāyu Devatā*.
5. *Kula Devatā pūjā* rituals among Non Newars.
6. Do you give animal *bali* during *Kula Pūjā*?
7. Do you have guthi which looks after the celebration of *Kula Pūjā*?
8. Like Newars do you have any formal rituals to introduce newlywed daughter in law or new born kids in your fraternity?
9. Your view about *Sukundā* as a combined form of *Dīp*, *Kalash* and Ganesh.
10. Cultural importance of *Kula Devatā Pūjā*.
11. Other than *Kula Pūjā*, what are the other occasions when the lineage god is worshipped?

प्रश्न सेट नं. ३

(प्रश्नावली सेट ३ को नेपाली अनुवाद)

१. हिन्दु संस्कृतिमा कुलदेवताको महत्व कस्तो छ ?
२. कुलदेवता र इष्ट देवतामा फरक ?
३. वैष्णव र शैवमार्गीमा कुलदेवता र इष्टदेवताको अवधारणा समान/फरक ?
४. कुलदेवता र इष्टदेवताको इतिहास कत्तिको पुरानो छ ?
५. शाहहरूको कुलदेवता आलमदेवी, त्यत्तिकै महत्वपूर्ण वायुदेवता यसको धारणा के हो ?
६. पूजा विधि विधान पूजारीको रूपमा अरू ठाउँमा पूजा गर्दा र आफू कहाँ पूजा गर्दा ।
७. बलि प्रथा - कुलदेवता पूजामा कहिलेदेखि आएको देखिन्छ ?
८. देवाली गुठीको व्यवस्था भएको/नभएको
९. नयाँ विवाह भएका बहारी र नवजात शिशु भित्र्याउने चलन भएको/नभएको
१०. कुलदेवता पूजाको सांस्कृतिक महत्व के छ ?
११. सुकुन्दालाई दिप, कलश र गणेशको संयुक्त रूप भन्न सकिन्छ ।
१२. देवाली बाहेक अरू कुन कुन बेला कुलदेवताको पूजा हुन्छ ?

Appendix F

PHOTO SLIDES



Plate 1: Lime powder smeared on the stone images of Lineage god. Also seen in the picture is the floor coated with red clay as part of purification.



Plate 2: Beginning of *pūjā* with tantric ritual (*Sonegu*)



Plate 3: A priest engaged in the making of *Mandala* to begin the *Pūjā*.



Plate 4: Priest inviting *Thākuli* to start the *pūjā*.



Plate 5: Wooden *Khat* (a type of small chariot without wheels) in which the metal images of lineage gods are carried to and fro from the Puja site to home.



Plate 6: A metal *khat*.



Plate 7: Metal image of a god placed on wooden *khat*.

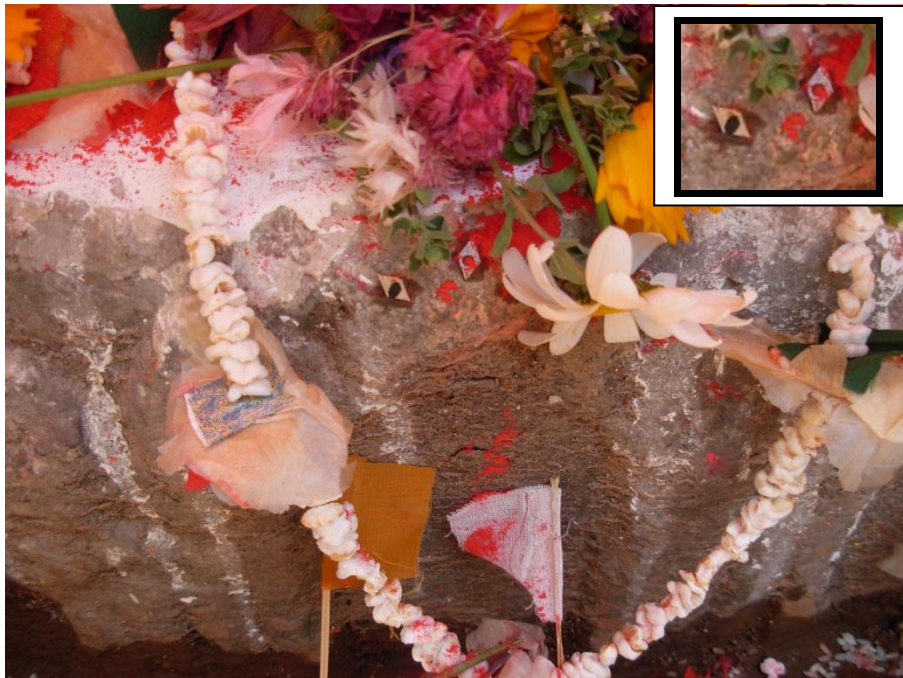


Plate 8: *Drishti* (enlarged image in the inset)



Plate 9: *Cūṭlā* (in the inset)



Plate 10: *Ārwā* (the green thread and the twig)



Plate 11: Metal image of a crow.



Plate 12: A metal dish used to offer the feast to the crow.



Plate 13: Intestine of the sacrificed goat being taken out to make the garland for Ganesh



Plate 14: A rare photo (taken in 1961) of when a duck is being sacrificed (a cropped picture on the right) to Ganesh and also when the thakuli is pouring milk on the main lineage god. The two acts are done simultaneously. The belief is that the milk is poured to pacify the Buddhist deity while the sacrifice of the duck is made to Ganesh. (Source: Tri Ratna Manandhar)



Plate 15: A chopped head of a goat that was sacrificed and placed in front of Ganesh. Also seen in the picture is the garland made up of blown intestine of the same goat presented to Ganesh.



Plate 16: Eggs offered instead of animal sacrifice.



Plate 17: Coming of Age ceremony during *digu pūjā*.



Plate 18: A newlywed daughter-in-law, ritually introduced by the female head (*thākuli naki*).



Plate 19: The procession of introducing the newlywed.



Plate 20: The newlywed daughter-in-law offering *kisli* for the first time. After this, she is considered as the member of her husband's *guthi*.



Plate 21: *Digu pūjā* site of Rajopadhyay at Ichhangu.



Plate 22: *Digu pūjā* site of Mali at Kirtipur.

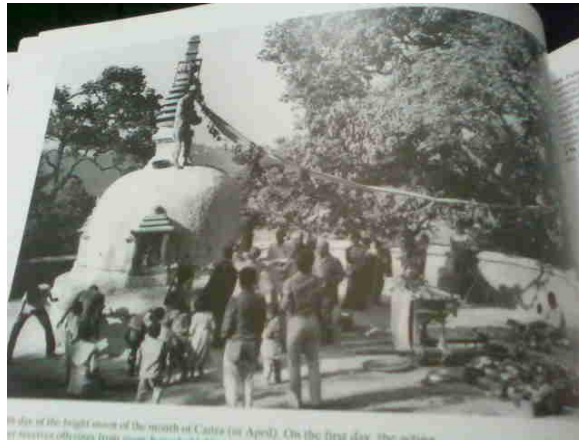


Plate 23: Caitya as lineage god of Buddhacharya at Swayambhu. (Source: Neil Gutschow)

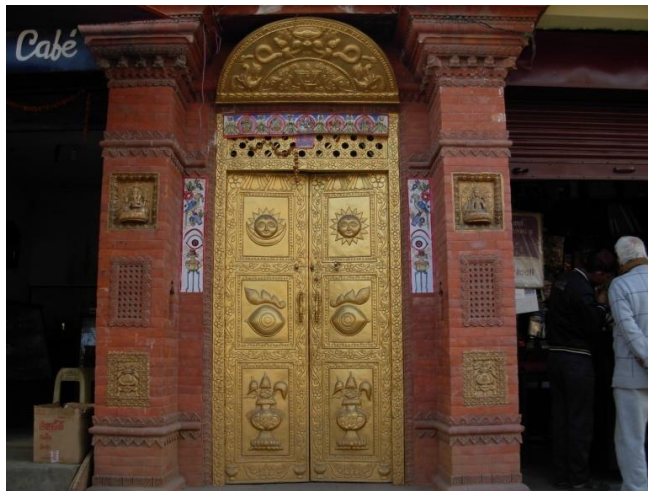


Plate 24: *Digu pūjā* site of Rajbhandaris' at Bijeshwori



Plate 25: Ruined stone images of lineage god at Kanga area. It seems like families have stopped celebrating their *Digu pūjā* here.



Plate 26: playing *Khin* (musical instrument) as a part of *dāphā bhajan* (Source: Dev Das, Thahity)



Plate 27: *Babhu* and *Tā* (musical instruments) used in *dāphā bhajan* (Source: Dev Das, Thahity)



Plate 28: People carrying wooden *Khat* (a type of small chariot without wheels) in which the metal images of lineage gods are carried to and fro from the Puja site to home. (Source: Deepak, Thamel)



Plate 29: *Phuki* members proceeding to the puja venue singing *dāphā bhajan* and carrying puja items (Source: Dev Das, Thahity)

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